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# THE EASTERN QUESTION

*"The first time I had the misfortune to differ with my friends was about the year* 1683, *when the Turks were besieging Vienna, and the Whigs in England, generally speaking, were for the Turks taking it—which I, having read the history of the cruelty and perfidious dealings of the Turks in their wars, and how they had rooted out the name of the Christian religion in above three score and ten kingdoms, could by no means agree with: and though then but a young man and a younger author, I opposed it and wrote against it, which was taken very unkindly."*

DANIEL DEFOE.*

* *"Life of Defoe," by George Chalmers.*
*Defoe's Works, Edin.* 1869.

# THE EASTERN QUESTION

FROM THE TREATY OF PARIS 1856 TO THE TREATY OF BERLIN 1878, AND TO THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

By THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

*TWO VOLS.—I.*

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# PREFACE.

It has appeared to me desirable that the views of those who have been opposed to the foreign policy of the Government since 1876 should be stated in a manner more systematic than that in which it has been possible to state them in speeches, or in pamphlets, or in the periodical literature of the day.

The Eastern Question has stirred more deeply the feelings of the country than any other question of our time. It was only natural, and it was only right, that this should be so. Five-and-twenty years ago, when that question engrossed public attention, there was comparatively little difference of opinion. This arose principally from the fact that Russia was then so clearly in the wrong that little or nothing could be said in her defence. But in a secondary degree it arose from the peculiar position of political parties. Lord Aberdeen

was at the head of the Administration. He had deserted the Conservative party; and, carrying with him most of his officers, had made a hated coalition with Whigs and Radicals. Consequently the Tories were hostile, and were naturally disposed to assail him where he was supposed to be most easily assailable. In the then temper of the nation, his weak point was his well-known love of peace. Although if the Conservative party had been in power, Lord Aberdeen would have unquestionably been either their own Prime Minister, or their own Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, they instinctively perceived that the reputation he had acquired in their service in former years was precisely the reputation which now made him most open to attack. Accordingly, the whole tendency of the Opposition was to point him out as an object of national suspicion, and to urge on the Government to war. The result was that when the imperious character of the Emperor Nicholas led him to reject every reasonable compromise, and when the Cabinets of London and of Paris came to the conclusion that they could yield no farther, the country was not only practically unanimous, but was

even hotly enthusiastic in support of a war which had become inevitable.

In 1876 everything was different—nothing was the same. The Eastern Question was raised by native insurrections in the Provinces of Turkey, excited and justified by the gross misgovernment of the Porte. The whole Eastern Question, therefore, as it was then raised, resolved itself into this—how the abuses and vices of Turkish Administration were to be dealt with by the Powers which had supported Turkey in the Crimean War, and by those other Powers, embracing all the principal Governments of Europe, which had ultimately signed the Treaties of 1856?

This question necessarily involves some of the most fundamental principles of morality and of politics. As a consequence, it has come to engage also the fiercest party spirit. At first it had no such connexion. Men spoke on behalf of humanity, and of nothing else. The earliest meeting expressive of "indignation" against the Turks had Lord Shaftesbury as its President, and was attended by men of all political parties. It was not then known what the action of the Cabinet had been, if, indeed, they had taken any

action at all. Very soon, however, it began to appear that, although full of indignation themselves, the Government somehow did not like others to express it. Then it came to be perceived what the explanation was. It was that all this "sentiment" looked in the direction of abandoning Turkey, whereas it was still, on account of "British interests," as much as ever the business of England to support her.

The moment this doctrine came to be detected as governing the policy of the Cabinet, there could be no compromise on the side of those who condemned it. It was a question, in the first place, of right and wrong. It was a question, in the second place, of the great follies which are always involved in a course of selfishness and injustice. On the other hand, this aspect of the question rallied to the side of the Government a powerful contingent. There is an important school, ably represented in the Press, who regard with nothing short of loathing the very mention of morality as affecting politics. They dislike, if possible still more vehemently, the smallest tinge of sympathy with the Christian races in the East, or the slightest symptom of the belief that the decay of Turkey has any

connexion whatever with the Teachings and the Example of the Arabian Prophet. What has religion to do with politics, or with the rise and fall of nations? Nothing whatever. It is mere fanaticism to think it has. The decrepitude now visibly affecting every Moslem Government in the world is an effect without a cause. As for morality, it is equally irrelevant. Politicians who think of it are no statesmen. Immediate self-interest is the only rule by which nations can guide their course.

Sometimes plausible attempts were made to rest the policy pursued, if not positively, at least negatively, upon higher and better arguments. When as yet the Government had no other thought than that of resisting the popular impulse to coerce the Turks,—when as yet it was the summit of their ambition to be allowed to do nothing—it was possible for them to say something which was at least inoffensive. Of this kind was the well-known speech of Lord Cranbrook (then Mr. Gathorne Hardy), that "we had no commission from heaven to go about the world redressing human wrongs."* The cheers with which this

* I quote from memory, not having the exact words before me.

plea is said to have been received, indicated how welcome it was to uneasy consciences. Of Lord Cranbrook's perfect sincerity when he used it, I have no doubt. Of all our public speakers there is, perhaps, no other whose sincerity is more obvious. But the sincerity with which an orator may use arguments of this kind does not necessarily imply that the inspiring motive of his opinions is visible on the surface. Even at that stage of the Eastern Question it was quite plain that the active sympathy of the Cabinet was with the Government of the Porte. When they were talking about "a commission" from heaven, which they had not got, they were really thinking about another commission—not certainly from heaven—which they thought they had got. And that commission was to support the Turks. Public feeling would not allow them to do as much as they desired. But if I rightly understand an allusion to this time, made not long ago by the Prime Minister, he regrets that he had not greater courage, and that he had not sooner swept away Lord Derby and all his works.

When currents of feeling and of opinion cutting so deep as these have been the prevailing

currents in the Eastern Question, it is not surprising that political excitement has run very high. And yet I have never been able to connect the question with party politics properly so called.* Of course every question becomes a party question when an existing Government is attacked. But the Eastern Question has no bearing upon domestic politics. It is true, indeed, that there is a tendency among Liberals to sympathise more or less actively with insurrections in support of popular liberties. There is, perhaps, also a corresponding tendency among Conservatives to sympathise with Governments against insurgents, however bad those Governments may

The very curious passage from Defoe which I have taken as a motto for these volumes, shows how untrustworthy are the sympathies of English party-spirit on the moral aspect of great political events. These sympathies are continually perverted by the most trivial and accidental causes. Many excellent men have given all their sympathy to the Turks, declaring all the time that they are "consistent Liberals." But consistent Liberalism, as a mere party-feeling in home politics, is no security whatever for a right judgment upon any question which rises into a higher sphere. If these same "consistent Liberals" had been alive at the time of the famous siege of Vienna, the chances are that, like Defoe's political friends, they would have been "for the Turks taking it."

be. But, beyond this, there is no natural connexion between Conservatism and a low morality in politics. On the contrary, I should be disposed to say that the natural connexion is the other way. The Utilitarian theory of Morals is generally regarded with antipathy by Tories, and has, in point of fact, been specially associated with the prophets and apostles of Radicalism. Yet in the Eastern Question we have had this theory applied in the coarsest form by Tory Secretaries of State, by Chancellors, and by Representatives of the old English Universities—where the doctrines of an "Independent Morality" have hitherto found an illustrious home. Indeed, I am wronging the Utilitarian theory of Morals, as it has latterly been purged and corrected by its most distinguished teachers, when I connect it with the flagrant caricatures presented in the speeches and writings of those who have supported the policy of the Government in the Eastern Question. The doctrines they proclaimed are doctrines which Jeremy Bentham would have considered coarse, and which the higher instincts of John Stuart Mill would have repudiated with indignation and disgust.

On the other hand, I differ very much from a section of the Liberal party which, if not very large, has been quite prominent enough to give a perceptible flavour to the whole. I refer to those who think, and who have said—very much in the terms, although not in the spirit, of Lord Cranbrook's speech—that we had nothing to do in the matter. Their sympathies, indeed, were on the right side. They would never have suffered the diplomatic influence of England to be exerted, as it has been exerted, against the cause of freedom in the East. Such influence as they could have exerted through diplomacy would have been exerted with wisdom and with justice. But I venture to think that they have shown an inadequate sense of the duties and responsibilities devolving upon us, not only as one of the Great Powers, but as the one of all the Great Powers which, rightly or wrongly, did most materially contribute to the pre-existing arrangement in the East of Europe. We could not shake off that responsibility; and as it was in the highest degree improbable that Turkey would have submitted to any mere efforts of diplomacy unbacked by force, I hold that it was the duty of England to join the

other Powers in acting upon the moral obligations they had incurred in the Treaty of 1856. The uncertain sound given upon this subject at the beginning of the contest was a fatal mistake. John Bull is a creature highly militant. He has not, indeed, that restless vanity which, before the last war, made Frenchmen feel that they had been insulted if anything was settled in any corner of Europe without their leave. But, on the other hand, Englishmen do not like to be told that they ought to content themselves with looking after stocks and cotton. They feel that they have duties as well as rights and interests in the politics of the East of Europe, and if their energies are not employed in a right direction, they will be very apt to employ them in a wrong one. The noisy nonsense which is now so rampant on the subject of what is called "Imperialism" seems in part, at least, to be a reaction due to this cause.

In the following work I have sketched the history of the Eastern Question almost entirely from Official Documents. I have endeavoured throughout to make it quite clear as to what is stated as fact,—what is direct quotation,—what is my own representation of the effect of docu-

ments not quoted *in extenso*,—what is inference,—and what is comment. I cannot hope that among materials extending over several thousand pages I have made no mistakes. But at least I can say that I have taken great pains to be accurate.

Looking at the manner in which witnesses adverse to the Government have been treated when they have produced evidence of the truth, I think it possible that some objection may be taken to the use I have made in the following pages of Lord Mayo's letters to me when I was Secretary of State. I do not myself feel that any explanation on this matter is required, since the passages I have quoted are all of an essentially public character. But there are some points connected with this subject to which I am very glad to have an opportunity of directing public attention.

In the Afghan branch of the Eastern Question it has been deemed important by the Government to make out, if they could, that Shere Ali had at one time been perfectly willing, if, indeed, he was not positively eager, to receive British officers as Political Agents or Residents in his Kingdom. This question has not really the importance which the Govern-

ment have attached to it,—because it was their duty to think mainly, not of what that unfortunate Prince may or may not have been willing to do at a former time under unknown circumstances and conditions,—but of what he had a right to object to under the actual engagements made with him by the representatives of the Crown in India. Nevertheless, the Government have shown a very great anxiety to prove that the Ameer had been willing to admit British officers as Residents in his Kingdom; and this is so far well—inasmuch as it shows some consciousness that they had no right to force the measure upon him if he were not willing. In the whole of their dealings with Afghanistan, this is the only homage they have paid to virtue. But their method of proceeding has been singular. The only two witnesses of any value on whose evidence they have relied, have been Colonel Burne, who was Lord Mayo's Private Secretary, and Captain Grey, who was Persian Interpreter at the Umballa Conferences in 1869. Colonel Burne's evidence is given in the "Afghan Correspondence" (I. 1878, No. 36, Enclosure 5, page 174). Of Colonel Burne's perfect good faith there can be no shadow of a doubt. But several

circumstances are to be observed in respect to his testimony. In the first place, he is now at the head of the Foreign Department of the India Office, and concerned in all the policy towards Shere Ali which has led to the Afghan war. In the second place, he writes nine years after the events of which he speaks, and wholly, so far as appears, from personal recollection. In the third place, he speaks with extraordinary confidence, considering that other officers of the Government who were present at all the Conferences positively deny the accuracy of his impressions. In the fourth place, a portion of what he says in respect of Lord Mayo's opinions, appears to me to be distinctly at variance with the evidence of Lord Mayo's own letters to myself. In the fifth and last place, it is to be observed that the whole of his evidence is founded on the knowledge he acquired as Private Secretary of Lord Mayo, "in his full confidence," and carrying in his mind that Viceroy's private conversations.

Now I am far from saying or implying that the Government had no right to use the information derivable from this source. But I do say that in a matter of the highest importance, involving the honour of the Crown, and the

peace of India, they were bound to take every means in their power to test and to verify the personal recollections of Colonel Burne. To use evidence of this kind as a means of ascertaining truth, is one thing:—to use it as a means of justifying foregone conclusions, is a very different thing. The two methods of handling such evidence are very distinct. We know, on the evidence of Mr. Seton Karr, who was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India at the Umballa Conferences, who was present at them all, and who must have been in constant personal communication both with Lord Mayo and all other principal persons there, that his evidence was never asked by the Government, and that this evidence, if it had been asked for, would have been given against that of Colonel Burne. I venture to add, that the Government, knowing that I was Secretary of State during the whole of Lord Mayo's Viceroyalty, and in possession of all his letters, might have applied to me for access to them. The whole of them, without reserve, would have been at the disposal of the Government. But if the Government were at liberty to use, and to found important action upon, the private information of

Lord Mayo's Private Secretary, speaking of Lord Mayo's private conversations, much more must I be at liberty to correct that evidence by Lord Mayo's own written testimony, conveyed in the most authentic of all forms—letters written at the time.

As regards the purport and the value of Captain Grey's evidence, I have analysed it at the proper place, in the following work. But there is one circumstance in connexion with that evidence which is another illustration of the rash and inconsiderate use which the Government has been making of testimony of this kind. Captain Grey, from his position of Persian Interpreter at Umballa, was necessarily in frequent and confidential communication with Noor Mohammed Khan, the favourite Minister and friend of Shere Ali. Now, Noor Mohammed being evidently a very able man, and comparatively well acquainted with Europeans, was naturally much considered by all officers of the Indian Government as the best source of information on the policy of the Afghan State, and on the personal feelings and desires of his master. In the course of confidential conversations, wholly private and unofficial, such a Minister is

induced to say many things which he would only say in perfect reliance that they would be considered as confidential in the strictest sense of that word. In fact, Noor Mohammed did frequently give information to our Officers and Agents, which it would have been the highest breach of confidence on their part to repeat in such a manner as to render it possible that the sayings of his Minister should get round to the Ameer. Yet this is the very breach of confidence which, in heated pursuit of their object, the Government appear to have committed in regard to the evidence of Captain Grey. At the Peshawur Conference, shortly before his death, among the other just complaints which Noor Mohammed had to make against the conduct of Lord Lytton and of his Government, this was one—that the letter from Captain Grey of October 13th, 1876, quoting Noor Mohammed as having been willing to advise or consent to the reception of British officers as Residents in Afghanistan, had been sent to him under circumstances which brought it before the Cabul Durbar. "It was laid before the Durbar," said Noor Mohammed to his friend, Dr. Bellew, on the 28th of January, 1877, "and

I was at once pointed out as the encourager of the Government in this design. It was as much as an order for my death."* Of the unjustifiable character of this letter, in other respects, I have spoken in the text. I refer here only to the breach of confidence involved in its quotations of the most private conversations of the Minister of the Ameer.

There was another circumstance connected with the Afghan question which has, in my opinion, imposed it upon me absolutely as a public duty, that I should explain Lord Mayo's engagements at Umballa, as he explained them to me. That circumstance is that one of the most serious misrepresentations made on behalf of the Government on this subject has been founded on a single passage in one of his private letters to me, which Lord Mayo has himself quoted in a public Despatch. The case is rather a curious one, and deserves special notice.

It will be seen that the first public Despatch of April 3rd, 1869,† in which Lord Mayo reported the proceedings at Umballa, is a very meagre

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* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, Enclos. 34, p. 195.

† Ibid., No. 17, p. 88.

one. The more detailed despatch which followed on the 1st of July,* was drawn forth from him by my Despatch of the 14th of May,† in which I had stated the objections which the Cabinet felt to one passage in his letter to the Ameer. In that second Despatch, a much fuller account is given. But one of the principal paragraphs (No. 22),‡ namely, that in which the Viceroy summed up the result of his negotiations, expressly refers to, and quotes the summing-up with which he had in the meantime supplied me in a private letter.

In that private letter Lord Mayo had classified the main points of the final arrangement on the principle of giving one list of the proposals which had been decided in the negative, and another list of the proposals which had been decided in the affirmative. It is, of course, an incident of all classifications of this kind—or, indeed, of any kind—that they place together things which are congruous only in some one or two particulars, and may be quite incongruous in every other. This inconvenience was somewhat

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* Ibid., No. 19, p. 92. † Ibid., No. 18, p. 91.
‡ Ibid., p. 95.

increased, in the present case, by the heading or title which he attached to the two lists. The proposals which had been negatived were called "What the Ameer is not to have." The proposals which had been affirmed were called "What the Ameer is to have."

It was inevitable that on this principle of classification Lord Mayo should include in the same list, things which the Ameer was "not to have" as a boon, and things which he was "not to have" as a burden. The benefits which he had hoped for, but which had been refused him, and the demands on our side from which he was to be relieved—all came naturally and necessarily under the same category. In this way, quite naturally and quite consistently, Lord Mayo included in the things the Ameer was "not to have," all of the following miscellaneous items: (1) no Treaty, (2) no fixed subsidy, (3) no European troops, officers, or Residents, (4) no domestic pledges. Some of these are things which he wanted to get; others, are things which he particularly wanted to avoid. He wanted to have an unconditional Treaty, offensive and defensive. He wanted to have a fixed subsidy. He wanted to have a dynastic

guarantee. He would have liked sometimes to get the loan of English officers to drill his troops, or to construct his forts—provided they retired the moment they had done this work for him. On the other hand, officers "resident" in his country as Political Agents of the British Government were his abhorrence. Yet all these things are classified by Lord Mayo, quite correctly, as equally belonging to the list of proposals which had been considered, or thought of, and had been decided in the negative.

Advantage has been taken of this by some supporters of the Government, and apparently by the Under Secretary of State for India, in the late debates in the House of Commons, to argue that all the items in this list were equally things which the Ameer wanted "to have:" thus representing Shere Ali as consumed by a desire to have British officers as Residents in his cities. This is by no means an unnatural mistake for any one to make who had no independent knowledge of the subject, and who derived all he knew of it from reading by itself the particular paragraph of Lord Mayo's Despatch to which I have referred. But it seems to me to be a mistake wholly inexcusable on the

part of any official of the Indian Department, because not even the personal recollections of Colonel Burne and of Captain Grey go the length of representing the Ameer as desirous of having British officers resident as Political Agents in his cities. The utmost length to which their evidence goes, even if it were wholly uncontradicted, is that Shere Ali would have submitted to the residence of British officers in certain cities, as the price of benefits which he could not otherwise secure.

But unjustified as this contention is, even on the unsupported testimony of these two officers, and unjustified also even on the 22nd paragraph of Lord Mayo's Despatch of July 1st, it is at once refuted by Lord Mayo's letter to me, quoted in the text, of the 3rd of June, 1869. That letter was expressly written to warn me against misapprehensions prevalent on the subject of his engagements with the Ameer. In this letter there is no possibility of mistake. The list he gives is a list of the "pledges given by him" to the Ameer. The first pledge was that of non-interference in his affairs. The second pledge was that "we would support his independence." The third pledge was "that we

would not force European officers, or Residents, upon him, against his wish."

This is the pledge, given on the honour of the Crown, which has been violated by the present Government. They have attempted to force Resident Officers upon the Ameer against his will, by threats of our displeasure, and by threats—still more discreditable—that if he did not comply, we should hold ourselves free from all the verbal and written engagements of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook.

It had been my intention to close this work with the Treaty of Berlin. A purely Indian War would not naturally have fallen within its scope. But the Afghan War of 1878 was not an Indian War in its origin. The cost and the burden of it are to be thrown on the people of India, although that cost is the price of a divided Bulgaria, and of a "real military frontier" for a phantom Turkey. It is a mere sequel of the policy of the Government on the Turkish Question in Europe and in Asia. I have, therefore, been compelled to deal with it. In doing so, I have been compelled to deal with transactions which, as it seems to me, can only

be read with a sense of humiliation by every man who values the honour of his country. If this be so, no "overwhelming majorities" in Parliament, and no successful campaigns against half-barbarous tribes, can compensate the country for the guilt into which it has been led, or protect the Government from the censure of posterity.

ARGYLL.

CANNES, *January*, 1879.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE TREATIES OF 1856, AND OUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THEM.

THERE is nothing so tenacious of life in politics, as that kind of false popular impression which in science is called a vulgar error. It is generally founded on some few facts, which are as indisputable as they are comparatively unimportant. Very often these facts are little more than diplomatic phrases, invented for the very purpose of veiling the nakedness of truth, but which catch the public ear and keep ringing in it to the exclusion of every other sound whatever. In such cases there is seldom any use in argument. The only thing to be done is to wait till the delusion dies under the practical refutation of time and of events.

Of this kind is the delusion that in supporting Turkey in her quarrel with Russia in 1853-4, the Western Powers acted under the belief that the Moslem Government of Turkey could be treated as in the fullest sense of the word, an independent Power, that they regarded it as a permanent element

in the European system, and that they pledged themselves to make it so by an unconditional guarantee. The fact is that no such idea animated their policy, and that no such guarantee was given. The one great question which was really at issue in that quarrel, was not the question whether Turkey was or was not a "sick man," or even a dying man; but it was the question whether the Czar had a right to solve that problem by anticipation in his own favour, and to take steps constituting himself sole heir and administrator of the "sick man's" possessions and effects. It was not the object of the Allies to express any opinion, or to establish any conclusion as to the ultimate fate of Turkey, whether as regarded its Government or its People. But it was their object to assert and to maintain the principle, that both in respect to the Government and the People, the political destiny of Turkey was to be matter of European, and not specially, still less exclusively, of Russian concern.

The truth is that in 1853, not only was the policy of supporting Turkey in her quarrel with Russia, perfectly consistent with a conviction that Turkey was sinking under internal and irremediable causes of decay, but it was a policy essentially founded on this conviction, and deriving from it all its urgency and importance. It was because Turkey as a Power, and as a Government, was decaying, and because sooner or later its place would have to be supplied by some other Government, and by the rule

of some other people, that it was necessary to take steps in time to prevent this great change from being settled prematurely in the exclusive and selfish interest of a single Power. It so happened, indeed, that in the immediate causes of quarrel, Turkey was in the right, and Russia was in the wrong; and this in a manner and degree which, under any circumstances, would have enlisted the sympathies of Europe. It so happened also that amongst these causes of quarrel there was no element arising directly out of the misconduct of Turkey—no circumstance which brought the long-standing vices of its Government into question or even into view. On the contrary, the prominent circumstances out of which the quarrel first arose, were those which presented Turkey as affording equal protection to all branches of the Christian Church which were represented in the Holy Places of their common Faith. It was this equality of favour and protection which was resented by wrangling monks. And behind the wrangling monks were rival Churches; and behind the rival Churches were jealous Nations, each contending for some predominant influence or exclusive privilege. Turkey appeared in this quarrel with no other fault than weakness, and perhaps with something of that want of straightforwardness which naturally arises out of weakness. But otherwise, and by comparison, her conduct appeared in a favourable light; and the unquestionable duplicity and violence of Russia invested the Turkish Government at the

time, with that sympathy which belongs to the victims of unjust aggression. All these circumstances taken together, coloured the language and affected the sentiments of men. The vices of Turkey were for the moment out of view. Her comparative helplessness only was apparent; and in that helplessness lay the danger of Russian success in establishing a dominion which Europe regarded with reasonable jealousy.

It was inevitable, in such circumstances, that the contest should take the form of supporting the Turkish Government as the existing Government of the country whose ultimate destiny was the real subject of contention. It was inevitable, too, that this aspect of the contest should be the prominent, if not the exclusive, one in the language of diplomacy. The "Independence" of Turkey became its watchword, not because that independence could be maintained as resting on the same foundation as the independence of other Powers, but on the contrary, because it was different, and because it required some exceptional buttress and support. Dependence and Independence are relative and not absolute terms. A nation which in the highest sense is independent, does not need the guarantee of others; and when the diplomacy of rival nations begins to concern itself about the independence of any State, it can only mean that this State is really dependent, but is to depend upon many rather than upon one.

This was the sense, and the only sense, in which the

Western Powers asserted the independence of Turkey in their contest with Russia; and this was the sense, and the only sense, in which they embodied that assertion in the Treaties which terminated the war.

In nothing connected with the Eastern question have loose popular understandings gone more astray than upon the actual provisions of the Treaties of 1856, and especially upon the facts and principles which in these provisions were implied rather than expressed. As it is impossible to judge fairly of the conduct of European Cabinets upon any question arising out of the condition or the conduct of Turkey, without a clear and exact knowledge of the Treaty obligations under which they lay towards each other and towards Turkey, as well as the obligations under which Turkey lay to them, it is necessary here to examine shortly what these obligations really were.

The Treaty of Paris (signed March 30, 1856) contains thirty-four Articles; but the fundamental principles of the Instrument are to be found in some four or five of these, and especially in those three—the 7th, 8th, and 9th.

The Seventh Article contains the principal stipulations which the European Powers make with Turkey and with each other in respect to Turkey.

The Eighth lays down the method by which these stipulations are to be brought into operation, and worked in certain specified cases of difficulty.

The Ninth records the engagement under which Turkey came to Europe in return for the protection

she was in future to enjoy under the engagements of the Articles preceding.

Let us look at each of these Articles a little more closely.

The wording of the Seventh Article is very singular. The European Powers, in the first place, "declare the Sublime Porte admitted to participate in the advantages of the public law and system (concert) of Europe."

We may well ask what this means? It is true indeed that the Moslem Government of Turkey had never acknowledged itself to be bound by the Public Law of Christendom. It owned no international obligations, except those founded on specific Treaties. And so barbarous were its habits in some matters affecting the common law of all Christian nations that down to a period comparatively recent, it did not respect the personal inviolability of Ambassadors when it quarrelled with the Government they represented. But practically all this had been long abandoned. There is hardly a State in Europe which, during the last two hundred years, has not entered into relations with Turkey more or less intimate—more or less important. Some of them had been in close alliance with Turkey, and had conducted in common warlike operations against one or other of the Christian Powers. Others of them had standing Treaties with Turkey, by which commercial advantages were secured, or by which privileges were obtained for their subjects resident in countries under the Government of the Porte.

All the Great Powers of Europe had long ago acknowledged the Sultan by Ambassadors or Ministers resident at Constantinople, and by diplomatic intercourse which had gradually become as formal and as well-established as that by which they carried on their intercourse with each other. Before the Treaty of Paris Turkey was not treated as an outlaw in Europe, nor after that Treaty was any novelty adopted either in the substance or in the forms of international dealings with her. What, then, was the meaning of this declaration of the Seventh Article, so imposing in its language, so evidently intended to be impressive in its announcement?

The explanation is very simple. Five and twenty years before the Crimean war there had been another war between Russia and Turkey, in which, as usual, Russia had been victorious, and had dictated peace by the Treaty of Adrianople. This had been the last of that long series of advances on the part of Russia which the Allied Powers now desired to check, and it was natural that the circumstances attending that war should be present to their minds. One of these circumstances, especially, could not fail to be remembered, and that was the very remarkable language held by the Czar Nicolas in his Declaration of war in April 1828. In that Declaration he recounted at great length all the provocations he had endured, and his own moderation in enduring them—a moderation all the more genuine because, as he went on to explain, Turkey had no protectors in

Europe, and no place in the family of Christian nations. „And yet"—so ran the remarkable and the warning words—"a war with Turkey would not in any way have embarrassed the relations of Russia with her principal Allies. No convention of guarantee, no political combination, connected the fate of the Ottoman Empire with the healing Acts of 1814 and 1815, under the protection of which civilised and Christian Europe reposed after her long dissensions, and saw her Governments united by the recollections of common glory, and a happy identity of principles and views."* And this was true. The great Treaties which, at the close of the wars arising out of the French Revolution, had given a new settlement to Europe, were silent altogether on the subject of Turkey. The possessions of other States, and the bounds of their habitation had been then all carefully defined. But the possessions of the Ottoman Porte, as they had not been affected, so neither were they noticed, or admitted into the enumeration of the States which constituted the European family, and the maintenance of which concerned the balance of European power.

Here, then, was a condition of things in direct contradiction of the fundamental proposition which the Allies had contended for in the Crimean war, and which, by their success in that war, they were now

* The Map of Europe by Treaty. Hertslet, vol. ii. No. 138, p. 780.

entitled to announce and to establish. That proposition was that the possession of the territories occupied by Turkey was not a matter of indifference, but, on the contrary, a matter of great concern to all the other Powers; that the direct acquisition of them by Russia, or the indirect acquisition of them by the establishment of exclusive influence and authority in their Government, was regarded by Europe as involving a very large and a very serious change in the distribution of political power. This, and nothing more than this, was the meaning of the Declaration in the first part of the Seventh Article of the Treaty of Paris. I say nothing more than this, because the words are susceptible of a more extended meaning. If Turkey was to be admitted to participate in the advantages of the "public law" of Europe, it might be held that Turkey was to be treated in all things as an equal among the Powers of Christendom, and as if she possessed a civilisation which could be regarded as equivalent to their own. But as this is not the fact, so neither was it the intention of the Treaty to assert it. No such equality of civilisation exists, and it is not possible to conduct relations with Turkey on an assumption which is fictitious. Accordingly there is one conspicuous matter in which the European Powers had uniformly shown, and continued to show after the Treaty of 1856, that they neither could nor would treat Turkey as an equal. There is no part of the law of nations more thoroughly understood and more universally recognised than the prin-

ciple that within its own territory every Government has supreme jurisdiction over all persons. If men choose to live in countries other than their own, they must submit to the laws of the State in which they live. There is not one of the civilised States of Europe which would not resent it as an intolerable pretension on the part of any foreigner that he should claim any exemption from its laws or from the jurisdiction of its Courts. Yet this is precisely the pretension which all the European Powers not only make but insist upon on behalf of their own subjects as against the Government of Turkey. And this claim is founded upon and is justified by the notorious fact that the Judicial Courts of Turkey are corrupt; that they cannot be trusted with the equitable administration even of their own law; and, above all, that their systems of procedure embody the barbarous and fanatical principle that the evidence of Christians is not to be admitted as against a Moslem. The European Powers in making the Declaration contained in the first paragraph of the Seventh Article never for a moment contemplated the abandonment of the privileges which they had secured for their subjects, of exemption from Turkish jurisdiction, and of the right of access in all matters of legal contention to the Consular Courts which were guaranteed by "Capitulations." Any attempt on the part of Turkey to assert on her own behalf the principle which undoubtedly obtains in all civilised States—the principle namely, of complete sovereignty over all persons residing

within its territory—would have been resisted and resented by every one of the Powers. Six years after the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris, Lord Russell, when Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had to refer to this subject, and we find him then stating broadly the exceptional nature of the principle on which the Capitulations are founded. "But there is one thing must not be forgotten. The Capitulations rest on the principle that Turkish rule and Turkish justice are so barbarous that exceptional privileges are required. No one would think of separate tribunals for Englishmen in France, or for Frenchmen in England; but so long as law in Turkey is undefined, so long as Pashas are allowed to sell justice and protection, so long will the privileges of the Consular tribunals be necessary."*

This system then, and the principle on which it rests, is a conclusive proof that when the Allies declared, in the first paragraph of the Seventh Article of the Treaty of Paris, that Turkey was now to be admitted to the benefit of the Public Law of Europe, they did not mean that Turkey was to be treated as having a civilisation equal to their own. They had, nevertheless, a perfectly definite meaning in the declaration which they made. That meaning was that Turkey was to be brought within the European system in the meaning of the Treaties of 1814 and 1815; that is to say, she was to be regarded as having

* Turkey, XVII., 1877, No. 40, p. 15.

a place in the balance of power, and that consequently her fate was to be acknowledged as matter of common interest and concern. The subsequent words of the Article make this meaning clear; for the Article proceeds thus: "Their Majesties engage, each on his part, to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire: guarantee in common the strict observance of that engagement; and will, in consequence, consider any act tending to its violation as a question of general interest."

This declaration of the independence of Turkey, and of the common interest which the Powers had in every act tending to its destruction, embodies the central idea of the whole Treaty. It was the best form in which they could repel and condemn the attempt of Russia to establish the special dependence of Turkey upon herself, and the best way to contradict the assertion of the Czar, in 1828, that Europe had neither the right nor the will to interfere with his proceedings in the conduct of this attempt.

It is, however, a complete misunderstanding of this Article of the Treaty of Paris to suppose that it was intended to protect Turkey against the consequences of her own misgovernment, or against the consequences of any just offence given by her to any one or more of the European Powers. Every one of these Powers had the right as much after this Treaty as before it to take separate action against Turkey in the event of provocation. And of such provocation each of those Powers must remain the judge. Recourse to

mediation was, indeed, provided for; but in the event of its failure the ultimate right of war remained. The several Powers were not deprived of their individual freedom by the declaration of Turkish independence. This would have been to place Turkey, not on a footing of equality with the other States of Europe, but in a position of superiority and of chartered licence. There are two conclusive arguments against such an interpretation. In the first place, national independence is inseparable from national responsibility; and, in the second place, the recognition of this responsibility on the part of Turkey is quite as conspicuous in the actual provisions of the Treaty as the recognition of the independence which involves it. Accordingly, the succeeding Article of the Treaty (the Eighth) is specially directed to provide for the case of a quarrel arising between Turkey and one or more of the other States of Europe—a case which could not but be liable to arise out of the very fact of her independence. The Article is as follows:

"If there should arise between the Sublime Porte and one or more of the other Signing Powers, any misunderstanding which might endanger the maintenance of their relations, the Sublime Porte, and each of such Powers, before having recourse to the use of force, shall afford the other Contracting Parties the opportunity of preventing such an extremity by means of their mediation."

No comment is required on this Article. It proves that the case of separate and individual action

against Turkey, by any one or more of the Powers which had engaged to respect her independence, was not only a possible case arising out of the very fact of that independence, but was a case specially contemplated and provided for in the very agreement which embodied the guarantee. And indeed, although nothing further is wanted in the way of argument to establish this conclusion, it is a remarkable fact that a fortnight after the signature of the Treaty of Paris, the Powers signed a Protocol, in which this Eighth Article was taken as giving expression to a principle of European policy which might be extended to all quarrels between the States of Christendom. This Protocol was laid before the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers assembled at Paris by Lord Clarendon on the 11th April; and was signed, after explanations, by them all. These explanations principally concerned this very point—how far such a declaration in favour of preliminary mediation in the case of quarrel between individual States, might be held to limit the freedom of each Government to be the judge of its own honour, or even of its own interests. And the Protocol was only signed after express reservations, inserted in the body of the Protocol itself, that it was to be understood as "without prejudice to the independence of Governments, and would not in any way fetter their free action."*

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* Protocol of Conference, &c., April 14, 1856. Hertslet's Map of Europe by Treaty, vol. ii. No. 269, p. 1277.

There is therefore no pretence for the contention that under the Treaty of Paris, which guaranteed the independence of Turkey, the several Powers of Europe compromised their own right to deal separately and individually with the Government of the Porte, in the event of their having just ground of complaint against it, and in the event of their failing to secure satisfaction from it, as the result of common consultation. The legitimacy or illegitimacy of such separate action against Turkey, must therefore depend entirely on the justice of the complaints on which it may be founded, and on the truth of the allegation which may be made in each case, that Turkey has failed in her duty and in the fulfilment of her obligations towards each or any of the Powers which engaged to respect her independence.

Let us now see what were the obligations undertaken by Turkey in the Treaty of Paris—what was the return she was asked to make for the new position assigned to her in the European family, and for the sacrifices some of those Powers had made to secure her independence.

All that the Guaranteeing Powers asked was an engagement on the part of Turkey that she would afford to her own people some tolerable government, —some administrative system recognising the fundamental principles of civilisation, and extending to all classes of her subjects some security for life, religion, property, and honour. And even this obligation it was the aim of the European Powers to impose on

Turkey in the form most consistent with respect for that independence which they were professing to establish—in the form least obnoxious to the pride and least offensive to the dignity of the Porte.

Accordingly it was agreed that Turkey should communicate to the Powers a new Firman, securing such privileges to all classes of her subject populations, which Firman was to emanate from the sovereign will of the Sultan, but was to be recorded in and annexed to the Treaty. It was farther agreed that this communication to the Powers of a measure affecting purely the internal affairs of Turkey, was not to be held as an admission on the part of the Sultan that those Powers had a right to interfere in the relations of his Majesty with his subjects, or in the internal administration of his Empire.

This careful regard for the dignity of the Porte, in the form of a stipulation so peculiar in its object and in its character, has given rise to a misrepresentation of the grossest kind. It has been said that in imposing upon Turkey an obligation to undertake the duties of a civilised Government towards her own subjects, the Powers at the same time disavowed, disclaimed, and renounced any right to see that this obligation was fulfilled. A concession so irrational is a sufficient condemnation of the interpretation on which it is founded. But on examining the Ninth Article of the Treaty of Paris, it becomes at once apparent that there is no justification whatever for this interpretation in the wording of the Article, which is as follows:—

"His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, having in his constant solicitude for the welfare of his subjects, issued a Firman, which while ameliorating their condition without distinction of Religion or of Race, records his generous intentions towards the Christian population of his Empire, and wishing to give a farther proof of his sentiments in that respect, has resolved to communicate to the Contracting Parties the said Firman emanating spontaneously from his sovereign will."

Such is the "communication" made to the Powers by the Sultan—a communication formal and official—so that the Firman is annexed to the Treaty of Paris, and became part of the Public Law of Europe. The Powers next acknowledge "this communication" on the part of the Porte in the following words, which form the conclusion of the Ninth Article:—

"The Contracting Powers recognise the high value of this communication. It is clearly understood that it (the communication) cannot, in any case, give to the said Powers the right to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations of his Majesty the Sultan with his subjects, nor in the internal administration of his Empire."

In these words, it will be observed, the Powers renounce no right whatever, except the right of quoting the Porte's "communication" as the ground of their right to interfere. But whatever right they may have to interfere on other grounds, they do not renounce. It was on no act of the Porte that their right was

founded. It was but fair towards Turkey not to quote her own concession as an admission compromising her independence. Moreover, the words thus used by the Powers had a most important practical signification. Turkey indeed gave a promise to the Powers, and in the "communication" of it that promise was recorded and made binding on the Government that gave it. But it was never intended that the execution of this promise should be placed in other hands than those of the Turkish Government itself. It was therefore not only consistent with the spirit of the Treaty, but it was an essential part of its whole drift and aim, that Turkey should be intrusted with the execution of her own engagements. It was neither desirable nor possible that the promises of Turkey to Europe, in respect to her internal Government, should be carried into effect by the agency of any foreign Power: and thus it will be seen that the concluding paragraph of the Ninth Article has a consistent and intelligible meaning, instead of the inconsistent and unintelligible meaning given to it by those who imagine that the European Powers, in extracting from Turkey a promise of the highest significance and importance declared at the same time that they had no right to insist on its fulfilment, or to resent the violation of it.

But there is more than this to be said on the importance and meaning of this Ninth Article. It is not merely that the European Powers had a right to see that Turkey fulfilled her promises in respect to the

reform of her own administration, but it is that in this matter, they undertook a duty which was inseparable from their conduct and their policy. The hope that Turkey might be able really and effectually to assume the character and to act on the principles of a civilised Government, was at best only a sanguine expectation. In one sense, indeed, it had not been an intolerant Government, because it viewed with supreme indifference the jealousies of rival Christian sects; and it allowed them all to enjoy a considerable amount of liberty of worship. But anything like equality before the law, as between the Moslem and the Infidel, was inconsistent with the fundamental precepts of Islam, and still more inconsistent with the habits and the temper of the ruling race. The one condition on which toleration was granted was absolute submission, and the notorious corruption of all the agents of administration was liable everywhere to convert this submission into a servitude full of indignity and of suffering. It was a most serious responsibility on the part of the Western Powers to uphold this Government even for a time, and even on those assurances of Reform which it was willing to give. But it was no part of the intention of the Powers to assume that responsibility without at the same time imposing on the Porte a corresponding responsibility towards themselves in respect to the promises which were thus given. On the contrary, it was one essential feature of the policy of 1856 that the Guaranteeing Powers should assume the position towards the sub-

ject populations of Turkey which Russia had succeeded in asserting for herself by a clause in the Treaty of Kainardji. In that clause the Sultan had given a promise to Russia that he "would protect the Christian religion and its churches" in his dominions—words vague and indefinite indeed, but all the more sweeping and comprehensive on that account. They had been interpreted by Russia as placing her in the position of a protecting Power over the interests of the Christian subjects of the Sultan; and whether this had been the real intention of the words or not, they did undoubtedly bear the interpretation which Russia was at least in a position to enforce. It was in the attempt to impose new engagements of a similar kind that Russia had encountered the armed resistance of England and France; and now, when that resistance had resulted in success, the only way of effectually defeating the Russian policy was to take this plea out of her mouth by an assumption on the part of the Guaranteeing Powers themselves of that duty which they would not allow Russia to exercise alone. It was in fulfilment of this policy, and in the discharge of this duty, that the Guaranteeing Powers required the Government of Turkey to give to them the promise recorded in the Ninth Clause of the Treaty of Paris, and to embody as a formal communication to them the Firman which the Sultan had issued, conferring on his subjects those liberties and privileges without which it was idle to hope for peace in the East of Europe, and

worse than idle to treat as civilised the Government of Turkey.

It will be seen, then, that the substitution of an European for a Russian protectorate over the subjects of the Porte is no mere inference from a single clause in the Treaty of Paris, but was a fundamental part of the whole policy of the Allies, and arose as a necessary consequence out of the very responsible action which they took.

Accordingly we find that this principle runs throughout the Treaty, and that even more definite expression is given to it in those subsequent Articles which dealt with the position of the Principalities which were vassals of the Porte.

The Provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia north of the Danube, and of Servia south of that river, were portions of the Turkish Empire which after many struggles had wrested from the Porte certain local liberties—privileges which withdrew them from the direct administration of the Sultan's Government. Russia had been a chief agent in accomplishing this result, and at the close of successful wars she had imposed upon Turkey certain stipulations by which the liberties thus acquired were placed under the guarantee of treaties with herself. By one or other of the Treaties of Kainardji in 1744, of Jassy in 1792, of Bucharest in 1812, of Ackerman in 1825, and of Adrianople in 1829, Russia held Turkey under stringent obligations in respect not only to general principles of conduct towards all those vassal States

but in respect even to the details of the relations between them and the Government of the Porte.

Russia had thus come to hold and to exercise a right of protectorate over those Provinces. This was only another part of the system—another exhibition of the policy—of which the Allies were jealous, and to which they now desired to put an end. There were only two ways of doing this; one would have been to abandon the idea of any protectorate whatever, and to leave the relations between the Sultan and his vassals to be regulated by the sovereign power which was now acknowledged in Turkey. The other was to assume on behalf of Europe the same right and duty of protection which Russia had acquired. There never was, however, any question whatever between these two alternatives. The idea of leaving Turkey free to re-establish, as opportunity might arise, the Moslem yoke over European populations which had passed from under it, was an idea never for a moment entertained. It was acknowledged that the only possible way in which the Russian protectorate could be abolished was by Europe taking that protectorate on itself. Accordingly, the Twenty-second Article of the Treaty of Paris runs as follows:—

"The Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia shall continue to enjoy under the suzerainty of the Porte, and under the guarantee of the Contracting Powers, the privileges and immunities of which they are in possession. No exclusive protection shall be exercised over them by any of the Guaranteeing

Powers. There shall be no separate right of interference in their internal affairs."

Five succeeding Articles (from the 23rd to the 27th inclusive) provide for the complete organisation of the Government of these Principalities, and for a revision of these laws and statutes, under an European Commission; whilst the final agreement with the Porte on these matters was to be embodied in a Firman which was to be placed thenceforward "under the collective guarantee of all Signing Powers."

The Twenty-eighth and the Twenty-ninth Articles extend the same system to the rights and immunities enjoyed by the Principality of Servia; and it was specially declared that there was to be no right of armed intervention in that Province without previous agreement between the Contracting Powers.

It will thus be seen that the principle of substituting an European for an exclusive or predominant Russian protectorate over the subject populations of Turkey, was one main principle running throughout the Treaty of Paris—essential to the policy by which it was inspired—arising necessarily out of the circumstances of the case, and enforced not in one or two, but in many Articles of the Instrument itself.

It is farther to be observed that some of the most prominent remaining Articles of the Treaty were nothing more than expressions of the desire of the Powers to give to this principle the most practical application. Among these provisions stands pre-eminent the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Articles, which

provided for what was called the neutralisation of the Black Sea. By these stipulations both Turkey and Russia were forbidden to erect naval arsenals on the shores of the Euxine, and the waters of that Sea were "formally and in perpetuity interdicted to the flag of war." Although these stipulations were in form equally applicable to both Turkey and Russia, yet practically, from the respective geographical positions, the interdict told against Russia alone, because the Bosphorus, being technically no part of the Black Sea, might be made by Turkey the seat of the most formidable naval arsenals and a station of the most powerful fleets, whilst at the same time its waters are practically the waters of the Euxine. Russia was thus forbidden to have any fleet for the defence even of her own coasts in the event of war. There can be no doubt whatever of the inequality of this provision. It could only be justified by the notorious fact that Russia and not Turkey was the Power against whose aggression it was needful to take precautions; and that the possession of armed vessels in the Black Sea by Russia would enable her at any time to re-establish her supremacy over Turkey, and possibly before the other Powers of Europe could have time to exercise the rights and the duties of their protectorate.

There was, however, another Treaty concluded in 1856, not between all the Powers, but between three of them separately from the rest. These three Powers were England, Austria, and France; and the object of the Treaty was to "guarantee the independence

and integrity of the Ottoman Empire." It is probably this Treaty which most dwells in the minds of those who imagine that the transactions of 1856 extended to Turkey an absolute guarantee, irrespective of her own conduct, or of the rights of other States in their relations with the Porte. And it is not unnatural that a vague popular impression should have arisen to this effect, because nothing can be at first sight more peremptory or unguarded than the First Article of the Treaty:—

"The high contracting parties guarantee, jointly and severally, the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire, recorded in the Treaty concluded at Paris on the 30th March, 1856."

But on looking closely to these words, and still more on looking at the preamble of this Treaty of guarantee, it becomes plain that the guarantee is not at all absolute or unconditional. The "independence and integrity" which is guaranteed is nothing more than that which the principal Treaty of Paris had "recorded," and we have seen how many and how various were the limitations which that "record" had involved. But the preamble makes this still more plain, inasmuch as that preamble declares that the whole object of this separate and Tripartite Treaty or guarantee was to provide for the case of "any infraction of the stipulations of the Peace of Paris."* In accordance with this preamble, the second Article declares that "any infraction of the stipulations of the said Treaty shall

* Hertslet's Map of Europe, No. 270, p. 1280.

be considered by the Powers signing the present Treaty as a casus belli." It is moreover to be observed that Turkey was not a party to this Treaty. It was a Treaty which bound the signing Powers only among themselves. Turkey had therefore no rights in virtue of it, nor any "locus standi" in appealing to it.

It is then a complete delusion to suppose that this Treaty was one of absolute or unconditional guarantee, or, in particular, that the three Powers undertook to defend Turkey in the event of that Power exercising her independence in such a manner as to give just cause of offence to any one or more of the European Powers. This case, as we have seen, was contemplated and provided for by the eighth Article of the principal Treaty. By that Article each and every Power so aggrieved was bound—not to abstain from the use of force—but only to delay having recourse to arms until mediation had been tried and had failed.

Such were the main provisions and effect of the Treaties of 1856, and it may be well before passing on to other matters equally important to see how far these Treaties were affected by the extraordinary events of 1870, and by the supplementary agreement come to by the Powers in consequence of those events at the Conference of London in 1871.

The great principle of the Treaty of Paris—that the fate of Turkey was to be a matter of European and not only of Russian concern—was in itself a principle so consonant with the interests of all the Powers,

that there was no reason why it should not be received as a permanent and established doctrine. But, on the other hand, a few of the provisions of that Treaty, devised for the purpose of imposing an immediate check on Russia, were of a character so stringent and severe that they could only have been submitted to by that Power as a consequence of decisive military defeat, and were obviously such as could only be maintained both by the close and sustained alliance of the Powers who had inflicted that defeat, and by circumstances so unchanged as to admit of a repetition of the action of 1856. The doubtful stability of these provisions, however, did not render them useless. If they lasted only a few years, they were enough to afford to Turkey time and security for the establishment of those reforms in her Administration which could alone give her any ultimate security. And this purpose was, as a matter of fact, amply secured. For fourteen years not an attempt was made by Russia to escape from these provisions. During that time the introduction of iron-clad vessels into all the navies of the world enabled Turkey to possess herself of a most formidable fleet; whilst Russia lay under a prohibition which would have enabled that fleet not only to resist any possible aggression by sea, but even to ravage the Russian coasts on the Euxine if any quarrel should arise.

Such was the condition of things when an event occurred which was destined to change the whole condition of Europe.

On the 19th July, 1870, the Emperor of the French declared war against Prussia, and within a few weeks had sustained such crushing defeats that it became at once apparent that, for a time at least, France had lost her place among the great military Powers of Europe.

Russia at once saw her opportunity, and seized it. But she seized it in a way which was justly offensive to the other Powers of Europe. If she had called for a revision of the Treaty of 1856 with a view to the modification of some of the very severe provisions it contained, and if she had represented that by the changes in naval armaments these provisions had become even more severe in their operation than they had originally been, it cannot be doubted that she would have gained her object without offence.

The Government of Russia, however, did not take this course. It simply issued on the 19th of October, 1870, a circular Note,* intimating to the other Powers of Europe that the Emperor of Russia "could not any longer hold himself bound by the stipulations of the Treaty of March, 1856, as far as they restricted his sovereign rights in the Black Sea." The Note proceeded in like manner to intimate that "His Majesty deemed himself both entitled and obliged to denounce to H.M. the Sultan the special Convention appended to the said Treaty which fixed the number and size of the vessels of war which the two Powers bordering on the Black Sea should keep in that Sea. . . .

* Hertslet's Map of Europe, vol. iii. No. 429, p. 1892.

His Majesty restored to the Sultan the full exercise of his rights in this respect, resuming the same for himself." The Emperor at the same time declared that "he fully adhered to his consent to the general principles of the Treaty of 1856, which had fixed the position of Turkey in the European system; and that he was ready to enter into an understanding with the Powers who had signed that transaction, for the purpose either of confirming its general stipulations, or of renewing them, or of replacing them by some other equitable arrangement which might be considered as calculated to secure the tranquillity of the East and the balance of power in Europe."

On the 10th November the British Government replied to this Note, objecting that it "implied the right of Russia to annul the Treaty of Paris on the ground of allegations of which she constitutes herself the sole judge;" but intimating at the same time that if Russia had addressed Her Majesty's Government and the other Powers, and had proposed for consideration a revision of certain Articles of the Treaty, they would not have refused to examine the question, in concert with the co-signatories to the Treaty.*

The result was that Conferences were held in London, and a Treaty modifying the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris relating to the Black Sea was signed on the 13th March, 1871.†

* Hertslet, vol. iii. No. 431, p. 1898.

† Ibid., No. 439, p. 1919.

Before the signature of this Treaty, and on the first meeting of the Conferences in London, a preliminary "Declaration" was signed by the Plenipotentiaries of all the Powers, bearing on the previous action of Russia in this matter. In that instrument the Signatory Powers declare that they "recognise it as an essential principle of the Law of Nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a Treaty, nor modify the stipulations thereof, unless with the consent of the Contracting Powers by means of an amicable arrangement."

No part of the treaty arrangements connected with the Eastern Question has been more violently wrested from its obvious meaning and application than this Declaration of 1871. It has been habitually quoted as if it precluded individual action, with all its legitimate results, against Turkey on the part of any of the Powers, even if Turkey had given just ground of offence. Such an interpretation is not only inconsistent with all the circumstances which led to the Declaration, but it is incompatible with the terms of the document itself. The whole form of the Declaration clearly shows that it was understood as condemning the particular course taken by Russia in denouncing certain Articles of the Treaty of Paris without any cause of quarrel with Turkey or with any of the co-signatory Powers. The Declaration has obviously no reference whatever to the contingency of such a quarrel, and of a resulting war. If the Declaration had been intended

to apply to such a case it would have been itself a total departure from the Treaty of Paris. But, on the contrary, this Declaration was followed by the signature of a new Treaty, the whole object of which was to ratify afresh the Treaty of Paris, and to reaffirm all its provisions except those which were expressly modified. Among those provisions there is one, as we have seen, of much prominence and very carefully framed, which contemplated and expressly provided for the case of separate action by any Power against the Government of the Porte.

It will be seen from this review of the Treaties of 1856, and of the action of the Powers both in that year and in 1871, that their whole object was to take the Eastern Question out of the hands of Russia alone, and to establish the principle that the fate of Turkey and the ultimate disposal of her territories was a matter of common concern, as affecting the interests of them all. But as the weakness of Turkey and the danger of her overthrow arose out of her own misgovernment, and especially out of the oppression and consequent alienation of the Christian populations in Europe, it was essential to the policy of the Allies that they should themselves occupy substantially the position which had been assumed by Russia. This was no mere subsidiary incident of their policy. It was the heart of it. It was a necessity arising out of the whole circumstances of the case. On the other hand, the duty of protecting the subject populations of

Turkey was a duty which could not be discharged by "interference"—in the sense of the European Powers becoming themselves directly responsible for the administration of Turkey. The Sultan and his Government must themselves perform their own promises to Europe. Nobody else could possibly carry them into execution. Moreover, Turkey, in being recognised as independent, was necessarily left under the responsibility which belongs to that position. She was not to be in the position of a chartered libertine in Europe, free to give what offence she chose, and yet protected from the consequences. All the Powers collectively were free to deal with her according to her conduct—that is to say, according as the Sultan's Government justified or did not justify the assumption that it could be numbered among the civilised Governments of the world. Nothing but experience, and the continuous experience of a considerable lapse of time, could bring this possibility to the test. So far as promises and declarations on paper were concerned, Turkey was not unwilling to reform; and it is quite possible that so far, also, as the intentions of its Government at the moment were concerned, these were not altogether insincere. But all this could go a very little way in settling the question whether the more deeply seated causes of Turkish corruption and misgovernment could be overcome. If they could—if an Administration even tolerably equitable and honest could be established in Turkey—it was at least possible that the subject-races might

rise peacefully to that position in the Government of their country which would insure the gradual substitution of a system essentially civilised for a system which had hitherto been essentially barbarous. It was at least an experiment worth trying. But it must never be forgotten that it was at best only an experiment—an experiment tried on the responsibility of the Allies, and an experiment tried not on any "corpus vile," but on millions of Christian people, and on the future of some of the fairest regions both of Europe and of Western Asia. It was an experiment, moreover, in itself involving the greatest of all possible interferences in the internal affairs of Turkey, namely, that kind of interference which upholds a Government against its natural enemies, and maintains the dominion of a people alien in race, in language, and religion, from all the elements of European civilisation. It was a necessary part of this experiment to allow it time. But it was as necessary a part of it that those who tried it should bear in mind the great duties and the heavy responsibilities it involved.

Accordingly we find, as we have seen, ample indications of a sense of this responsibility in the actual provisions of the Treaties of 1856. And although I cannot admit that even the highest personal authorities can affect the question, it is at least satisfactory to find in the language of those most entitled from position, and most qualified by character to speak on this matter, the fullest acknowledgment of the truth

respecting it. Foremost among these was the Prince Consort; and accordingly we find, in the third volume of his "Memoirs," that when it fell in his way to define the great objects of the Western Powers and of the European alliance which they desired to form in relation to the Eastern Question, the Prince specifies emphatically as one of these objects, "the cancelling of all previous Russian Treaties, and the substitution of an European for a Russian protectorate of the Christians, or rather of European protection for a Russian protectorate."*

To the same effect is the official language of Earl Russell when, a few years later, he had to discharge some portion of the duty which we, with others, had thus undertaken. "The Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen, while actively defending the independence of Turkey, felt that in objecting to the separate interference of Russia, they were bound to obtain some guarantee for the security of the subjects of the Porte professing the Christian faith, whether of the Greek or Roman Catholic Church, or Protestants, whether Christians by descent or Turkish converts."†

It is satisfactory to find that in theory at least the view here presented of our position under the Treaties of 1856 was adopted by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1876. In his speech in the House of Lords on the 31st July, he said:—"As to the obligations imposed on us by Treaty to do what in us

* Life of the Prince Consort, vol. iii. p. 92.

† Turkey, XVII., 1877, No. 148, p. 115.

lies to protect the subject-races of Turkey from misgovernment, the obligation to intervene for the protection of the Empire from external attack implies a corresponding duty of control." This is in complete accordance with the argument maintained in these pages. Nor is it less satisfactory to find that as the Foreign Secretary admitted the obligation, so also did he repudiate that interpretation of the Ninth Article of the Treaty of Paris, under which it has been so often attempted to deny the obligation, or to evade it. "There is an Article in the Treaty," he proceeded, "no doubt, which seems to preclude such interference, but I read that Article as not in any way forbidding a joint intervention in the interests of humanity, the intention clearly being to guard against exclusive interference by any one Power."*

Let us now see what the working of this experiment actually was, and how it has been watched and dealt with, during the twenty years which elapsed between the conclusion of the Treaties of 1856 and the outbreak of those insurrections in 1876 which have revived the whole Eastern Question, and have resulted in a bloody war.

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* Hansard, vol. cxxxi. p. 101.

## CHAPTER II.

### WHAT WE KNEW OF THE STATE OF TURKEY FROM 1856 TO 1875.

IT is my object in this chapter to review the information as to the state of Turkey which was in the possession of our Foreign Office when the troubles began in 1875.

In order to do this it is necessary to direct attention for a moment to the nature of the evidence, and to the sources of information on which every Government must rely; and perhaps it is not less necessary to advert to the habitual frame of mind in which that evidence and information was regarded by the Ministers and officials to whom it came.

Antagonism to Russia on account of her exclusive claims and aims was the inspiring motive of the Crimean war. The contest took of necessity the form of supporting Turkey. When the war ended the same necessity continued, and gave rise to a strong and permanent bias. One other necessity, namely, that of great changes and reforms in her Administration, was indeed recognised; but there was a disposition to hope all things, and to believe all things favourable to the policy of the experiment we were trying. It may be said with

truth that the whole staff of our Foreign Office, whether at home or in Turkey, were strongly under this bias. From the Minister or Ambassador at Constantinople down to the smallest Vice-Consul, they were all under its prevailing influence. In each case it depended on the force of individual character how far that influence was allowed to blind men to obvious truths, or to lead them to attach insufficient value to damning facts. So long as Lord Stratford de Redcliffe held the high post which he had occupied for the greater part of half a century, our patronage and protection of Turkey was blended with untiring energy in rebuking its Government for every failure of duty, as well as encouraging it in every effort, however feeble and spasmodic, in the direction of reform. Even when that post was occupied by inferior men, the feebler influence which belonged to them was used generally in the same direction. But the desire to protect and uphold the Government of Turkey was a standing and permanent temptation to consider the welfare of the subject populations of Turkey as a matter of secondary and subordinate concern, instead of its being, as it really was, the very essence of the whole Eastern Question, even when considered in the light of policy alone. The power of such a temptation as this is very great, even upon men of the strongest character. Upon weaker men it is simply overwhelming. Familiarity with the corruptions of a barbarous system keeps continually

before their mind a low standard of political desire. The facility with which fresh promises can be exacted, and the still greater facility with which the violation of them can be denied, give ample room for the encouragement of hopes which a more impartial disposition would at once reject as vain, and for the acceptance of excuses which a more conscientious judgment would condemn as false.

There is, however, one discrimination to be made as to the value of the evidence afforded by men placed in such circumstances as these. All the influences adverse to the value of such evidence are at the maximum whenever any complaints are made against Turkey by Russian Ministers or Consuls. On the other hand, the same influences are at a minimum when our own Ministers and Consuls are not excited by this cause—when things are quiet—and when their own observation and experience are left free to find natural and spontaneous expression. We may often find the very same man presenting an opposite view of the same facts, and giving evidence in a totally different sense, according as he speaks or writes under the one influence or the other. This is natural enough. It is not easy to realise fully the position of our Consuls in Turkey. Foreign Consuls in this country are nobodies. They have their own business to do, more or less important to the natives of the country which they may represent. But it is business of no interest to the community at large, and hardly brings

them into contact with even the most subordinate authorities of the Government. But foreign Consuls in Turkey are Potentates. Not only do they exercise, as we have seen, a jurisdiction of great influence over their own countrymen resident in Turkey, and over all who may claim, however doubtfully, the protection which attaches to any connexion, however remote, with the Government which the Consul represents, but indirectly by the very fact of being civilised and comparatively enlightened men, in contact with the authorities of an Administration which is more or less barbarous, they exercise a powerful influence over these authorities, and through them over the native population. It is the aim and object of every foreign Consul in Turkey to extend this influence, in the interests of his own Government. They are all, consequently, jealous of each other. It is a constant struggle for exclusive, or, at least, predominant authority. As a necessary consequence of this position and this struggle they alternately oppose or support the officers of the Turkish Government, according to the policy of the moment. If that policy calls for it, they are in the habit of bullying those officers with very little respect indeed for the "independence of Turkey." On the other hand, when the same conduct is exhibited by the Consuls of other Powers, and especially when it is exhibited by the Consuls of Russia, our own Consuls support with all their might the Turkish officials, and

exhibit much ingenuity in devising excuses for all their shortcomings.

Now it is to be observed that every native insurrection is quite sure to bring into the fullest operation all these tendencies of feeling and of conduct. Native insurrections are necessarily dangerous to the Porte, to which all our agents are officially favourable; whilst, on the contrary, such movements are as uniformly regarded with sympathy, if not with actual favour, by the Consuls of the Russian Government. To seek for far-off causes and agencies to account for events for which nearer and more simple causes are amply sufficient, is a tendency not peculiar to political affairs. But these affairs are very apt to intensify this disposition, especially when it serves to cover the remonstrances of an uneasy conscience. It was not convenient to dwell upon the justification which insurrections might have from the gross abuses of a Government which it was held to be our interest to support. It was easier to ascribe everything to intrigues which, if they existed at all—as no doubt they often did—derived all their power from the injustice and corruption of the Turks. Consequently, in weighing the evidence which has been furnished to our Foreign Office on the condition of Turkey, it is necessary to consider what that evidence was before the late insurrections began. We have, then, the testimony of our Ministers and Consuls at its best—when they were not excited by jealousy and fear of

Russia, but spoke under the impulse of what they knew or saw themselves—of what came before them from time to time of the conduct of the Turkish Government, and of the condition of the people under it.

It may be well, however, to begin with a witness who does not belong to this class at all, but who from long experience knew Turkey well, and who had no political theories of any kind to induce him to be silent on what he saw. This witness is a man no less distinguished than General (now Sir Fenwick) Williams, whose valiant defence of Kars against the Russian army was one of the most remarkable military achievements of the Crimean war. On his way to undertake that defence he was for some time resident at Erzeroom, which was the centre of Turkish Administration, not only over Armenia proper, but over a large part of the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan. The difficulties he had to encounter in overcoming the ignorance, idleness, and corruption of the Government which he was sent to defend, were not much known to the public at home, but can never be forgotten by any member of the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen. General Williams's energy in dealing with the obstructions he encountered marked him as one of those Captains who achieve success by a combination of many gifts.

During his residence at Erzeroom he had ample opportunities of observing the condition of the territories around, and of becoming intimately acquainted

with the causes of that condition. On the 25th of February, 1855, he addressed to Lord Clarendon the following despatch :—*

"Erzeroom, February 25, 1855.

"My Lord,

"When peace shall have crowned the efforts of England and France, one of the greatest obstacles to the reforms which must follow, will, in my humble opinion, arise from the present total want of organisation of the civil police called cavasses.

"It shall be my aim first, to endeavour to point out to your Lordship the extent of this crying evil, and then to offer for the consideration of her Majesty's Government that remedy which appears to me, after so many years' experience in all parts of this Empire, to be the most simple, both as to form and application.

"The whole body of cavasses, whether employed as police in the capital and other cities and towns of the Empire, or in the provinces as the agents through whom the revenue is collected, constitutes an engine of tyranny perhaps unequalled in the world. The individuals of this vast corps are unknown to the Central Government, either by name or by character; they are the cast-off servants, minions, and satellites of those Pashas who, having bought at Constantinople their position, through acknowledged procurers of place (the Armenian bankers and private Turkish agents), quit the capital, surrounded by a body of these indigent and most unscrupulous cavasses, who are, on the arrival of their master at the seat of his

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 6, p. 3.

government, associated with that phalanx of provincial cavasses who, being cognisant of what the extortion of the dismissed Pasha has left to the unhappy peasant of each village, soon become as fit agents as their instructors for the prosecution of the one and sole object of their new master—that of repaying himself the purchase-money of his new dignity, and subsequently that of filling his coffers.

"It is needless for me to assure your Lordship that no language can portray the infamy which characterises the life and character of this body of men: the scenes of their exploits lie in the villages, and more especially those inhabited by the Christian; although, it must be stated, the Mussulman cultivator does not escape their insolence, extortion, and rapine. They are solely responsible, if I can use such a term, to their Pasha; he appoints and dismisses them according to their deserts; and your Lordship may infer that their consideration in the eyes of the Pasha is measured by their aptitude at robbery and oppression; and throughout the vast extent of this Empire, over which I have travelled, I have invariably found the last stroke of ruin inflicted on a crumbling village to have been perpetrated by a cavass. The Mussulmans villages might, and perhaps did, remonstrate; but woe to the Christian serf who opened his mouth before this tax-gathering and tyrannical cavass.

"I feel convinced that the Allies, who have fought and bled to keep the Russians out of these fertile countries, will not allow their triumph to be a barren one to the unhappy and oppressed Christian, nor to his fellow-subject the Mussulman cultivator.

"Having condensed into the shortest possible shape my description of the corps of cavasses, and of their fearful misdeeds as they now afflict this crumbling State, I will venture to offer for your Lordship's consideration the remedy I propose for so deep-seated and so intolerable an evil; in doing so, I would hazard one remark, and that is, the change must be mooted, and insisted on, by those Allies who have fought and bled for Turkey; for as certain it is that the Porte will never bend its thoughts towards such a reform, so is it equally evident that those Powers who will join after the battle is won in the protectorate of Turkey, will look on with an indifferent, or perchance a jaundiced eye, to any such movement.

"The remedy I propose is simple in the extreme:—

"1. Let the corps of cavasses for the different Pashaliks be a military institution, admitting of Mussulman and Christian enrolment in their respective Pashaliks; they possessing the indispensable advantage of local knowledge in the districts thereof.

"2. Their organisation would present no difficulties whatever; and if the project be entertained by Her Majesty's Government, I am ready to undertake the task for Asia.

"3. No Pasha, upon any account whatever, to interfere with the nomination of a cavass, nor to suffer the enrolment of any of his followers or servants in these corps.

"4. The muster-rolls of each corps to be addressed to the Seraskierat, and the pay and clothing

for the men, as well as the horses and appointments of the mounted part of the corps, to be strictly under the control of that department.

"This reform must, in my humble opinion, proceed hand-in-hand with others which I doubt not are contemplated by Her Majesty's Government; otherwise, the various races which compose this population will always retain those seeds of distrust and aversion for the dominant race which ages of tyranny and oppression have but too deeply implanted in their bosoms, and which can only be extinguished by real equality of rights in the future administration of justice throughout the Sultan's wide-spreading Empire.

"The zaptiehs, or irregular horse-police, also require a thorough reorganisation; they assist the cavasses in plundering the villages, but are only employed by the Pashas on ordinary occasions, and moreover do not possess the influence which protects the cavass throughout every shade of villany which he practises under the auspices of his master.

"I have, &c.,

(Signed) "W. F. WILLIAMS."

I have republished this admirable despatch in full because of the emphatic testimony it bears to these four things:—First, to the conviction which arose in General Williams's mind, and must arise in the mind of every honourable man, as to the duty of the Allies, as inseparable from their actual conduct in maintaining Turkey. Second, to the great danger that this

duty would be neglected. Third, to the fact that the misgovernment of Turkey was not the mere result of weakness, or inability to maintain order, but that it was due immediately to corruption at head-quarters, so that the officers and agents of the Government were the principal authors of all the miseries inflicted on the people under them. And fourth, to the impression on the mind of the writer that, bad as the state of things was, it was quite susceptible of reform—on the one condition, of the work of amendment not being entrusted to the promises or to the performances of the Turkish Government, but put into the hands of an European officer with full authority to act.

I do not recollect that this despatch attracted much attention at the time. All eyes were then directed to the impending contest. Success in that contest was the first anxiety and the first necessity of the situation. When it closed, the principle was accepted, as we have seen, that the Government of Turkey could not be put into commission, and that the Sultan must be entrusted with the fulfilment of his own engagements to Europe.

Let us now look at such later evidence as came to the Foreign Office concerning the condition of the same great Province, which the gallantry of Williams and his band of officers had saved to the Turkish Empire.

Thirteen years after the close of the Crimean war and after the Treaties of 1856—a time ample, not

only for the commencement, but for the establishment of serious reforms—we have a much more elaborate and circumstantial account of the condition of one large part of this great Province, from the British Consul (Taylor) for Koordistan. This report is dated March 19, 1869, and was addressed to the same Minister, Lord Clarendon.* It refers especially to the northern districts of his Consulate, and particularly that part of the country which lies about the Russian and Persian frontiers, between Ardahan, Kars, Bayazid, and Van.

It is to be remembered with reference to this country that from its geographical position on the borders of three Empires, two of which have been long declining, from the wild tribes of Kurds passing and repassing with facility across the frontiers, and from the physical features of the country which is rough and mountainous, even an honest administration, which is not also strong, might fail to some extent in establishing complete security over the whole of its extent. If this were all that could be alleged against the Government of Turkey, there could be little cause for the most serious complaint. But the report of Mr. Taylor represents a condition of things which is not to be confounded with the mere unavoidable consequences of weakness. Weakness indeed there is, but weakness arising out of, and

* Turkey, XVI., 1877. No. 13, p. 16.

aggravated by, the worst vices that can corrupt a Government or afflict a people. Just as in the short despatch of General Williams, so in the more detailed Report of Consul Taylor, after thirteen years had elapsed, the agents of the Government, from the highest to the lowest, are represented as the curse of the country, and the active causes of its depopulation and decline. Without reading the whole of this Report, it is difficult to give any adequate idea of the condition of things which it depicts. "The intolerable measures pursued by the Government to collect the Tithes," is, as usual, one of the principal complaints. In one district, Consul Taylor reports, that during three years, "out of 106 villages, only 76 now remain, and in each of the latter, five or six small farms are entirely deserted." Then there is the "old, old story" of all the consequences which flow from the farming of the revenue, and the personal corruption of the governors. Of one province (Diarbekr) Consul Taylor reports that a new Turkish governor had arrived with the appropriate name of "Wolf Pasha," and of this officer of the Turkish Government, we have the following account :—

"The new Vali, Ismail Pasha, who also bears the appropriate name of Koort, or Wolf Pasha, exerted himself vigorously to recover a portion at least of this vast sum, and succeeded, by means incredible in our age, in wringing some 40,000*l.* from real or imaginary debtors. I use the latter term also, as, in

the case of the Mardin Protestants, reported to Her Majesty's Embassy, any false charges, suggested by jealousy, religious intolerance, or revenge, was, if it involved a debt to Government, at once seized upon by the Vali.

"It must be confessed his conduct was impartial, as Moslems and Christians, rich and poor, were equally the objects of his attacks and victims of an unheard-of treatment to compel prompt discharge of real or fictitious obligations. Moolas, aged men, and Council members, were made to transport heavy loads on their backs in a burning sun, from one place to another, for no other purpose than by such torture to accelerate payment, their steps being unnaturally quickened by frequent blows from the muskets of the brutal soldiery appointed to superintend their unaccustomed labour. Married Christian women (Protestants) were dragged by night, in the absence of their husbands, from the harems, and stripped of their gold ornaments; while several of the aged male members of the same creed were so severely injured by the treatment they were subjected to, as to be confined to their beds for months.

"A system of government allowing such practices, however much it may for the time intimidate defaulters, evil-doers, hordes of Koordish thieves, and temporarily relieve the Treasury, can in the end result in nothing but the depreciation of revenue, and effectually prevent any improvement in the present wretched condition of the Diarbekr Vilayet."

Then we have, in the same paper, ample evidence of the force of Moslem hatred and contempt of the

Christian inhabitants," and of the actual protection afforded to the Kurds and to all other Mohammedan depredators. Fanatical Sheiks "preached their conduct to be lawful, and even meritorious, when practised against Giaours." When the Government pretended to interpose for the protection of the aggrieved population, it "inquired" through agents, as corrupt as those whose conduct was the subject of inquiry.

"Lately a new Commissioner, Osman Bey, a native of Erzeroum, has been sent to undertake a fresh inquiry, with a view of bringing the guilty parties to justice, but public opinion places no faith in the native selected for this purpose, or his desire to institute a searching inquiry. The immunity the Koords seem to enjoy disinclines the Christians from making complaints, or following them up if they do so, for, as stated before, should they do so and the guilty parties be punished, sooner or later they would, both in person and property, suffer more, endure infinitely greater calamities than those they originally complained of. It is thus that great crimes always unpunished, grievous oppressions unredressed, are perpetrated, and merge into what the Koords and Sheikhs consider, as warranted by custom, permissible. An active, upright Governor really desirous of putting a stop to such practices and punishing the criminals, is thus, from the popular Moslem clamour, unable to hold his post a month, while the term-server becomes a tool in their hands.'

As the general result, Consul Taylor's Report represents the country as in many parts becoming desolate.

"It was dispiriting, on my onward route to Kaghizman through Shuragel, the ancient Shiraj, formerly the richest and most populous district in Armenia, to pass so many spots marking the sites of towns and villages, some of them only recently deserted, but now encumbered with their ruins or the mean huts of the indigent population that remained. On many of these deserted sites the massive fabrics of early Armenian churches had successfully resisted the ravages of time and the efforts of man, urged by an implacable hostility to everything Christian, to destroy them. Round several, in spite of decreasing numbers, poverty, and oppression, the Armenians still cling with affectionate pertinacity, dragging on an existence, as well as they are able, under the tolerance of the Turkish Aghas or Beys who, either as the descendants of the Timariots or in consequence of the poverty of former owners, have in the course of time dispossessed the Christians of the lands and villages about.

Similar is the account given by Consul Taylor of the condition of the country round one of the ancient centres of civilisation in this part of Western Asia:—

"From Van, following the southern shores of the lake over a good though hilly road at times, I reached Bitlis, already noticed, and from thence by

the western side of the Van lake Ikhlat, situated on its shore.

"*Ikhlat.*—The miserable hovels of the new town are built out of and amongst the splendid ruins of the old Armenian city of Klat. Gardens and ploughed lands occupy the extensive site of this once magnificent place. In the whole of the Erzeroom Villayet I know no other spot so favourably situated for trade and agriculture, or for a military position from whence the Koords about Bayezid, Malazgerd, Boolanik, and Tchookoor, near Moosh, could be coerced and kept in due subjection, so as to allow peaceable subjects proper facilities to develop their industry and the producing qualities of the extensive lands, now deserted, in its vicinity.

"The system of agriculture practised is more careful than anywhere else in my district, and the returns, both in quality and quantity, consequently exceed in proportion all other localities in the villayet. But here again, although only fifty miles from Erzeroom, the Koordish element is paramount, and its effects, as everywhere else where it exists, blighting. The Koords belong to the Hasenanlee and Millikanlee tribes living in the vicinity of Akhlat, Boolanik, and Malazgerd, under the chieftainship of Soofie Agha, Khaznadar, and Eeseh Oghli. The depredations of their dependants, encouraged by, and proceeds shared in by them, are manifest all around. Deserted villages, ruined churches, crumbling mosques, abandoned fields, meet the eye everywhere. The ruthless conduct of

these ruffians, rendered bolder by the feebleness of the Executive, has rendered what ought to be a paradise a desert. People who formerly possessed thirty to forty buffaloes, besides sheep and cows, at the same time working ten ploughs, are now begging their bread; and within the last two years the Christian villages of Medzk, Kosthiyan, Tapa Vank, Jizroke, Khulleek, Jogkey, and Sivratore have been utterly abandoned by the Armenians, owing to the depredations of the people mentioned above. Paying scarcely anything to Government, and receiving hard coin from Damascus and Egyptian dealers for their sheep, they are now the only moneyed class; all the surplus cash of the provincial villagers has by degrees come into their hands. They are in consequence the usurers of the country. There is hardly one Christian not indebted to them for sums it will be impossible for him to pay without sacrificing his all. The interest paid to the Koords is between three and four per cent. per month, with the additional obligation of keeping a cow for the lender during the winter months for every 1000 piastres so advanced, or paying 100 piastres in lieu. The inhabitants still remaining in the few villages existing are therefore entirely at their mercy and dependent upon their forbearance for existence."

The apologists of Turkey are very apt to plead that the oppression of its Government affects the Moslem as much as the Christian population. Even if this were true, it would be a strange plea in arrest of judg-

ment. But it is not true. There is, no doubt, a very great amount of misery inflicted on all without distinction of religion. But the Christian subjects of the Porte are exposed to miseries from which their Moslem fellow-subjects are almost, if not entirely, exempt. And these miseries affect them in the most sacred of all human interests—the honour of their families. Here is an example which came under the personal notice of Consul Taylor:—

"From Ikhlat I reached Erzeroom, viâ Boolarick, already noticed, and Khunnus.

"On my way I stopped at the miserable village of Pirran, on the Boolanik Lake, containing only fourteen houses, or rather hovels, although a few years back it had a population of 500 souls, owning amongst them more than 1000 head of horned cattle; now I had the greatest difficulty in obtaining the necessary milk for tea.

"The evening before, a Koord in the service of the Boolanik Kaïmakam, a notorious character, only lately released from prison, aided by six other miscreants of his tribe, the Hassananlee, had broken into the house of the village priest, and after beating him and his son so as to leave them half dead, abducted the young bride of the latter. She was recovered some ten days after, and delivered up to her friends, but in a most pitiable state. It proves the abject terror the Koords have drilled into the Christians by the system they pursue towards them, that, although this assault and abduction took place

at an early hour, and the villagers heard the cries of the victims, none of them ventured to their rescue."

On this subject generally, Consul Taylor says that he has dwelt principally on the oppression of the Christians, not because others do not suffer also, "but because the Christians, in addition to deprivation of property, daily jeopardise their lives, and what is more terrible, the honour of their females, in daily struggles for existence; trials from which the Moslems are exempt."

On no point connected with the "Eastern Question" is this Report more instructive than on the effect of this condition of things upon the disposition of the people towards Russia. Many Englishmen are too much disposed to quiet their own consciences in respect to their support of Turkey, by asserting that as between its Government and that of Russia there is little to choose. If they cared to think at all seriously on the matter they would know better. It is true that Russia is a country much less advanced than the nations of Western Europe in its system of government, and it is true that special jealousies predispose us to hate and fear it. It is true also that from the very fact of its being a Christian Government, under very peculiar conditions of connexion between secular and the ecclesiastical authority, it is intolerant in some matters to which the Government of Turkey is naturally indifferent. But the administration of Russia in

all its provinces, as compared with such an administration as that which we have seen described in Turkish Armenia, is simply the difference between civilisation and barbarism.

Accordingly, Consul Taylor's Report of 1869 abounds in evidence that the population subject to the curse of Turkish Government were escaping wherever they could into the neighbouring territories of Russia. Of one district he says that "750 families have within the last six years emigrated to Russia, whilst 500 more have sent this year representatives to Grivan to negotiate a similar step." Again he says: "At the village of Arvos, eighteen hours from Erzeroom, I was witness to the strong Russian feeling pervading most of the Armenian peasantry." Again he says: "I believe that which personal observation has demonstrated, a large and influential party of nearly all classes and creeds, if not openly, secretly incline to Russia." Even the Kurds, in spite of the licence they enjoyed from the Turkish Government, are described by Consul Taylor as "united in their partiality for Russia." Of the Armenian population, which [illegible] the backbone of such industry as is possible under such a Government, Mr. Taylor reports as follows:—

"*Armenians.*—The advice and ostentatious leaning towards Russia of the Armenian clergy in my district, headed by the Catholicas residing at Etchmiazin in Russia, and his bishops in these parts, have naturally enough inclined the more ignorant mem-

bers of their flocks—rich and poor—to adopt the same views; and considering also that a whole Christian house of ten souls in Russia pays only, for all taxes, 9 roubles (1*l.* 10*s.*) annually as against three times the sum here, if there has not been a general emigration, it is simply owing to the fact that disposable arable lands in Russian Armenia are scarce, while the reverse prevails in Turkey.

"Everywhere throughout these districts I found the Armenians bitter in their complaints against the Turkish Government, at the same time that they were unreserved in their praises of Russia, openly avowing their determination to emigrate. This bias is owing, as already stated, to the constant hostile teaching of their clergy; at the same time, ample cause for discontent, as has already been shown further back, is afforded by the really wretched system of Turkish provincial administration, the unequal imposition of taxes, scandalous method of levying them and the tithes, persistent denial or miscarriage of justice, and practical disavowal of the Christians' claim to be treated with the same consideration and respect as their equals among Moslems."

Nor is this valuable Report less instructive in the light it sheds upon the power of such an administration as that of Turkey, to employ as its instruments the worst and most corrupt members of the Christian community.

"Experience has taught me that which candour and strict impartiality compel me to state, that the

subordinate officers of the local Government are aided and abetted in their disgraceful proceedings or encouraged in persistent indifference to crying wrongs, as well by the criminal assistance as wilful apathy or silence of the Armenian Medjliss members, ostensibly elected by the suffrages of their co-religionists to guard their interests. Unfortunately, then, as the evil lies as much with the Christians as the Turks, under existing regulations there is no remedy for it, and there can be none till the local authorities really see for themselves that the Porte's orders are really carried out and to open the way for the introduction of a higher class of people for such employments. As it is, no man of wealth, influence, or character will accept a seat in any one of the Councils; he will not waste time in attending to official duties in a place where he has to put up with the contumely and impertinent insults of the Moslem members, all which are patiently borne by the fawning and obsequious Christians whose living depends upon this appointment. And even were a man of character and ability to accept a nomination at the hands of his community, the Pasha, with whom in fact the fate of such elections lie, as he has the power of rejection, would always prefer a needy, pliant member to one whose riches and position would place him beyond the reach of his menaces or influence. The interests of the community are consequently entrusted to speculators accustomed to the atmosphere of the Serai in their capacity of revenue farmers or Serafis, who in such positions have, in addition to their own disgusting servility, all the chicanery and vices of

Turkish officials—acquired a dangerous influence, either as the partners or creditors of the chief provincial officers. Such an influence might be meritorious and useful if exercised in the interests of justice and duty, but it becomes a downright evil when practised, as it always is, for their own benefit or that of their partners in corruption, and scarcely ever for their brethren. The claims of the poor are either neglected or betrayed, and those of the rich depend upon the amount of their presents or degree of their sycophancy."

The significance of this evidence coming from a British Consul is all the greater when we find that Mr. Taylor's feelings are, nevertheless, like those of all his official brethren, strongly in favour of supporting the Government of Turkey, and that he speaks of the leading Armenian clergy as purposely ignoring the villanous conduct of their own people, "the more readily to induce their dependents to adopt the disloyal views they propagate." It would be well for our Consuls and Ministers in Turkey to ask themselves sometimes whether any "loyalty" can be really due to a Government which does not afford to its subjects even tolerable security for their lives, their property, or their honour. We are, however, dealing only with the evidence as to facts; and full as all our Consuls are of official jealousy of Russia, and disposed as they universally are to ascribe every evil they see to Russian intrigue, it is at least interesting to observe

the evidence they cannot help giving as to the causes which make Russian intrigue successful and Russian dominion an object of desire. "The charge," says Consul Taylor (speaking of Russian intrigue) "is a very common one among the ignorant Turkish officials employed in this frontier province, and generally, as in this case, groundless."* It must be added that Consul Taylor not only states the facts faithfully, but draws the right conclusion in the following important passage:—

"I have ventured thus far to intrude my opinions of what I believe to be the predominant feeling among the Armenians in this province, because they form in their numbers, position, and occupations, the most influential class, and as being the one most favourable under present circumstances to Russian interests, the most dangerous in an underhand way to the State. The only efficient panacea for such hostile feeling rests entirely with the Government. Were it to take efficient measures to insure the content of the people by radically redressing their wrongs, inflicting severe and impartial justice on their oppressors, remodel its system of tithe assessment, that under which at present the other taxes are divided and collected, and really carry out the spirit of its numerous firmans in favour of Christians, it would, I am confident, remove existing disaffection and promote the present and progressive loyalty of its subjects. Without such a programme they will be forced into bankruptcy; that sooner or

* Turkey, XVI., 1877, p. 39.

later must give rise to emigration or open downright rebellion. I cannot exaggerate the gravity of the situation, nor urge too emphatically that the measure alluded to be recommended to the authorities."

In 1871, a further report from the same Consul on the same subject represented matters as substantially unchanged, except that by means of a great increase of taxation, a larger revenue had been successfully extracted from the people. An increase of taxation unaccompanied "by any energy and real goodwill displayed on the part of the local authorities to render it more tolerable, or to efface old grievances."*

The evidence on the reform of Turkey in this part of her dominions is brought down to the latest date, before the outbreak of the late insurrections, by various despatches from Consul Zohrab, coming down to 1875. They are remarkable as indicating an increase of those particular evils and sufferings which arise out of Mussulman fanaticism, leading to outrages on the honour of Christian families. Here is one of the latest:—

"Erzeroom, July 19, 1875.

"My Lord,

"I have the honour to inclose copies of two despatches I have addressed to Sir Henry Elliot reporting two cases of persecution.

"The real condition of this part of the Sultan's

* Ibid. No. 23, p. 55.

dominions is, I fear, so little known, that the cases I expose may seem exaggerated. I have, however, reported authenticated facts. Were I to report all the cases of cruelty and oppression which have come to my knowledge, but which I have not been able to investigate, but one conclusion could be deduced from them—that fanaticism, cruelty, and dishonesty are the only incentives to action which move the men who are sent to administer this unhappy country.

"Unfortunately such a conclusion would be the correct one. Bribery alone can now obtain an appointment; honesty and administrative capacity are not required; the ability to pay is the barometer of a man's ability to do duty. The country is consequently overrun with a crowd of hungry, unprincipled, ignorant men, whose only object is to enrich themselves as fast as they can. They are surrounded by satellites, who work for them and for themselves. Extortion is the every-day work of these men.

"I believe but few of the officials coming from Constantinople are imbued with fanatical ideas; generally they are very indifferent, but as they cannot enrich themselves without the aid of the influential Mussulman classes, they are obliged, in return, to permit cruelty and oppression towards the Christians.

(Signed) "JAS. ZOHRAB."*

In reference to two other cases which happened about the same time, Consul Zohrab concludes as follows:—

* Turkey, XVI., 1877. No. 86, p. 142-3.

"I have brought two cases to your Excellency's notice.

"In the first case a girl was forcibly taken from her home by the authorities, and for her courageous adherence to her faith she has been punished by a sentence of perpetual exile and separation from her parents, her safety being the untenable plea of the authorities.

"It is clear that any Mussulman can now legally rob Christian children from their parents, and, with the aid of the authorities, forcibly convert them to Islamism. Christians, therefore, are no longer safe, and Europeans are equally in peril. A Turk has merely to go and swear before an authority that he heard some member of a European family declare a desire to embrace Islamism to plunge that family in grief and trouble."*

The general result could not be better expressed than by Consul Taylor in another of his despatches, dated in 1872, giving an account of an atrocious murder of an eminent Christian citizen of Erzeroom,—a murder in which there was every reason to believe that high Turkish functionaries, and even the Chief Justice of the District, were concerned, and which, though perpetrated in open day in the streets of the city, had remained unpunished.

"Such proceedings persisted in so long by a high judicial functionary, second only in rank here to the Vali, and his clique, probably directed from other

* Turkey, No. 16, 1871. No. 86, p. 145.

quarters, have completely served openly to estrange the Moslem and Christian bodies in this town and province who were before seeming friends; and, taken in connexion with the foul murder recorded of an enterprising Christian, whose only faults were inherent business capacity and consequent success, seem, in my poor opinion, illustrative of the sign of the time in this country, which the fanatics hope will result in the destruction of all European influence, Christian progress, and civilisation; to be succeeded by the establishment of a forced exclusive polity, essentially Islamic. If such absurd hopes are ever destined to be realised under the influence of such men, nothing can be looked for than the speedy desolation of these provinces, and their consequent absorption by a stronger, more stable power, whose aggrandisement has always depended on her neighbours' faults."*

Such is a sample of the accounts, of which the British Government were in possession, before the troubles of 1875-6 began, in regard at least to one of the most important Asiatic Provinces of the Turkish Empire.

Let us now turn to the European Provinces, and see what was the official information before the Government in respect to them.

The earliest evidence to be adduced is all the more remarkable on account of the circumstances under which it was elicited, and the persons from whom it

* Ibid. No. 86, p. 142.

came. In 1860 the Russian Government addressed to the Government of the Queen strong representations on the misgovernment of the Turkish Empire, and especially of the great European provinces of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. It was deemed necessary to direct an inquiry through the British Consuls. Our Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Henry Bulwer, accordingly addressed a Circular to all those Consuls in the Ottoman dominions. This Circular was so framed as to be in fact one long "leading question." Every excuse was suggested beforehand for any possible vices or defects of Turkish administration. There was, therefore, even more temptation than usual brought to bear upon the Consuls to adopt the tone which was most natural to them when Russian accusations against Turkey were in question.

It is under circumstances such as these that we find, nevertheless, the most convincing evidence furnished by our Consuls that the condition of Turkey was rotten to the core. Consul Holmes is a leading witness. This gentleman has since been selected by her Majesty's Government for the honours of the Crown, and it cannot be doubted that this favour marks a due appreciation of the faithfulness of his evidence. "When I affirm," he says, "that all provincial authorities, of every denomination and grade, with rare exceptions, act according to the inspirations of their own personal interest, in the hope and almost

with the certainty of being able, in case of need, to purchase immunity, I am sure that I am stating a proposition that will obtain the assent of any experienced resident in Turkey." Despite every exaggeration, the existence of which he admitted, he declared that "the conduct of the Turkish authorities in these provinces had been sufficient, in conjunction with foreign agitation, to bring Bosnia to the very verge of rebellion, whilst the Herzegovina was absolutely in a state of war." He pleaded that Christian evidence must be admitted in courts of justice; "and if," he added, "this should be too great a shock to Turkish prejudices in their ordinary courts of justice, special courts should be instituted for all cases in which Christians are concerned." He speaks of the traditional venality and corruption of the mass of individuals by whom the professed good intentions of the Sultan should be carried out. He speaks also of the inadequate pay given the lower grade of functionaries, and declares that they have not the means of living without extortion; whilst "the Porte seemed knowingly to encourage this oppression, by which they really live."* So strong was Consul Holmes's impression, even in 1860, of the misgovernment of the provinces which have lately been the seats of insurrection, that he wrote, on the 10th of August in that year, "that without some powerful intervention, Bosnia

* Reports on Condition of Christians in Turkey. 1860. Presented to Parliament, 1861. P. 73.

and Herzegovina might soon witness scenes similar to those which have lately terrified Europe in Syria."

The general result of these reports of 1860 was to establish the fact that generally throughout the Turkish Empire the Christian subjects of the Porte were exposed to that master-grievance, the exclusion of their evidence in all causes between them and their Moslem fellow-subjects. Sir H. Bulwer, in corresponding with his Government on the subject, could not conceal his impression of the irremediable rottenness of the whole Turkish Government. The substitution of a new race he declared to be the only remedy. "Without recourse," he said, "to Europeans an administration upon a satisfactory basis can never be organised here. Without recourse to a new race energy can never be infused into affairs. We cannot, in fact, conceal from ourselves what is at the bottom of this bad administration which we deplore."

Seven years later, in 1867, another volume of Reports was presented to Parliament on the condition of Christians in Turkey. From Sperns, Vice-Consul Barker reported to Lord Lyons that the social condition of the Christian in European Turkey was "much worse in every respect than that of the Christian in Asia." Consul Calvert, writing from Monastir, observed that "nothing irritated the Christians more than the too frequent abductions of Christian women." This is an irritation which even the stoutest friends of

Turkey will admit to be at least natural, if not absolutely excusable.

Consul Stuart, writing from Janina, went deeper into the whole question and declared that causes connected with the religion of the dominant race were at the root of the misgovernment of the country. "There are," he says, "redeeming traits in the Mussulman character which it is but justice to record. Observed, however, in the wider circles of society and from a political point of view, the Mussulman of this country appears under a different aspect. His religion has set upon him a seal which nothing can change or efface. It pervades his whole life individual, social, political; it enters into all his motives, and regulates all his actions, admitting of no change, and allowing no fraternity with others. These remarks apply chiefly to the educated Mussulmans of the country, and to those of high rank. As to the mass of the Albanian Mussulmans, they know little more of their religion than the pride and indolence which it inculcates. Now as regards the Christians, it is certain that the desire of progress and Western civilization is spreading among them. With the diffusion of education, new ideas are gaining ground and new aspirations are growing up. But how to give effect to these ideas and aspirations, there is the difficulty. This tendency is in direct antagonism to the policy of their rulers, who, while rejecting Western civilization, fear its influence and dread its approach. They, therefore,

endeavour to repress the onward impulse of the Christians, to check their progress, to keep them down. And as they can no longer do this by open force, they are careful to exclude from the country all the material aids and appliances of advancing society. Hence they refuse to make roads, to establish banks, facilitate communication, encourage industry, promote trade, invite foreign skill and enterprise, &c., by all of which the Christian would be the chief gainer. So that this system of refusal proceeds, not as has long been thought, from apathy and procrastinations, but from a studied policy of self-preservation which sees danger to Ottoman supremacy in the progress of the rayahs."*

Three years later, in May, 1870, Consul Holmes reported from the capital of Bosnia, that the illegal exactions of the officers of the Turkish Government was then leading to an emigration of families into Austria, and that "discontent is clearly spreading throughout the Province, which the mal-administration of the present Governor-General is only calculated to increase."†

In the following year, February, 1871, Consul Holmes had occasion to report to Lord Granville a case of the usual misconduct of Turkish justice, in a question affecting the conduct of a Greek Bishop of high rank, and he adds :—

* Report, 1867, p. 57.

† Turkey, XVI., 1877. No. 14, p. 36.

"The Greek community have been much irritated by the long and seemingly unjust delay of almost a whole year between the arrest of these people and the arrival of a reply from Constantinople regarding their disposal. There is, however, nothing unusual in this case, and I merely report it to your Lordship because I had already alluded to it, and because it has attracted much local attention. The unnecessary delay and neglect, to the prejudice often of innocent persons; the open bribery and corruption, the invariable and unjust favour shown to Mussulmans in all cases between Turks and Christians, which distinguish the Turkish administration of what is called 'justice,' throughout the Empire, cannot fail to suggest the question—what would be the lot of foreigners in Turkey were the European Powers to give up the Capitulations? I am convinced that their position in the provinces, at all events, would be intolerable, and that they would quit the country to a man, while the outcry and feeling in Europe against Turkey would ultimately cause her ruin. The universal ignorance, corruption, and fanaticism of all classes precludes all hope of an efficient administration of justice for at least another generation."*

This despatch is a very remarkable one, not only from the breadth and sweeping character of its accusations against the Turkish Government, but also from the notice that was taken of it, and from the defence of it, to which Consul Holmes was (most

* Ibid. No. 20, p. 45.

fortunately) driven. It will be observed that although it arose out of a comment on a particular case, it expressly affirms that all the worst characteristics "which could affect even more aggravated cases, were the common characteristics of the Turkish administration, and in particular that Moslem tyranny and fanaticism, and the inequality of Christians before the law, were perpetual sources of misery and oppression. Language so unsparing does not seem to have been grateful to the official disposition of our Minister at Constantinople to support Turkey on all possible occasions; and it appears that Consul Holmes was called upon to substantiate his charges. This call was responded to with vigour. There is nothing like putting a man upon his defence, if we wish to get at the truth.

On the 18th March, 1871, Consul Holmes had been desired by Sir H. Elliot to specify the names "of the corrupt officials whose corrupt dealings render their removal desirable." To this challenge the Consul responds emphatically on the 17th April, "I reply that they are all corrupt. I do not hesitate to say that of all cases of justice, whether between Mussulmans alone, or Turks and Christians, ninety out of a hundred are settled by bribery alone."* He adds that positive proof is impossible, because "there is a common bond of interest among all classes of

* Turkey, XVI., 1873, No. 21, Inclos. p. 47.

Turkish employés, which causes them to unite in stifling evidence and preventing exposure." The Governors-General of the Province were themselves generally as corrupt as their subordinates. It is a satisfaction, to see, however, by this despatch that one Turk who has proved himself a gallant soldier was, at least for a Turk, comparatively just and humane. Osman Pasha is specified as an exceptionally good Governor-General. But even under his administration numerous cases are given of the gross oppression to which especially Christians were exposed.

Then came a new Governor-General, "who, as is usual, was eager to disapprove everything done by his predecessor, and gave the Turks every encouragement in his power." We have next a passage which illustrates the imposture habitually practised upon Europe, when the Turkish Government pleads its own laws that purport to provide for equal justice between Moslem and Christian. There are always certain tribunals which at least profess to afford such equality. But then, there are also always other tribunals which are purely Moslem, and are governed exclusively by the religious code, which is a code systematically unequal and founded on religious exclusiveness. The Turkish authorities have always the power of referring particular cases to one or the other as they choose; and even the courts which contain a Christian element are so constituted as to be worse than worthless for the protection of the subject races.

Consul Holmes' despatch throws a clear light on the iniquities perpetrated under this system.

"Since the present Governor came to Bosnia the entire machinery for the administration of justice seems to have become deranged.

"Lately the Tijaret Medjliss (Tribunal of Commerce), at Mostar, was suppressed, and all matters referred to the Mekemmeh (Turkish Religious Tribunal). As there are numerous Austrian traders at Mostar, this irregularity was strongly protested against by the Austrian Consul at Mostar and by the Consul-General here. At Serajevo the greatest confusion prevails. The President of the 'Temiz-i-Houkouk' Medjliss (Court of Appeal) and of the Mekemmeh is the same person, and matters which ought to be judged by the Civil Law (the Nizam Nameh), is decided by the Religious Law (the Sheriat), according to the Cadi's good pleasure. The affairs of the 'Idareh Medjliss,' or Council of the Administration of the Vilayet, are also conducted in a manner which leaves an arbitrary power in the hands of the Pasha and the chief Turkish members. The Christian members are mere cyphers. They are never chosen by the population. A few names are put down by the Pasha and some by the principal people, but the former selects whoever seems to himself and the other Turks to be the most convenient and harmless individual.

"One of the members, Petraki Petrovic, at present is a Government contractor, by which he is legally ineligible. His brother is also a cashier of the Local Government; such relationships facilitate dishonest

intrigues. When any business is before the Medjliss, it is generally talked over by the Pasha, and some others of the chief Turkish members, the Christians merely listening to what is said if they can understand it, which is not always the case. A Kiatib makes a rough draft of the decision arrived at. This is afterwards brought to the Pasha, who corrects and often changes it to suit any particular object he may have in view, it is then copied out fairly, and, at a subsequent meeting, it is handed round to the members, without being read to them, as the mazbata agreed on at the previous sitting, and is then sealed by all.

"It is thus that the curious fact of the unfailing unanimity apparent in all 'mazbatas' happens. There are never any dissentient members—never any objections recorded.

"In a vilayet of which half the population is Christian, why are not Christians employed in any branches of the administration? There are none in the Customs, none in the zaptieh, none in the forest guards, none in the postal or telegraphic departments.

"Christian zaptiehs could be most advantageously employed where Christians are concerned, as then, at least, in cases of complaint against these policemen, it could not be attributed to fanaticism.

"The Turkish police is, with much justice, a subject of grievance. A great many of the men are notoriously bad characters, who generally have to bribe the colonel and binbashi for admittance to the force, and reimburse themselves by extorting money almost wherever and whenever employed."*

* Ibid, No. 21. Inclos. p. 50.

Such is the state of things which Consul Holmes reported in 1871, not as existing merely here and there, but as "obtaining in Bosnia" as a whole. It is true, he says, that as compared with the state of things twenty-five or thirty years before, even this terrible condition of affairs was an improvement. But when we read the illustration he gives of the sort of things that were done at that former period, we see that the comparison is but between degrees of barbarism of which one is but a little less shocking than the other. Here is a specimen of the kind of atrocity which used to be committed so lately as the period above-named, and which Consul Holmes narrates as "giving a slight idea" of what the condition of things then was:—

"Again, a young Christian groom, in the service of a Turk, being about to be married, had the imprudence to dress himself for the occasion in certain colours and articles of an apparel which the Turks jealously appropriate to persons of their own religion, and his bride in gay silks. They proceeded to the Christian cemetery outside the town, where, in the absence of a church, marriages were then celebrated. While the service was proceeding several armed Turks, who had accidentally appeared as spectators, were observed to collect some wood and kindle a fire. As soon as the ceremony was finished they seized the unhappy pair, hacked the girl to pieces with their yatagans, and having half-murdered the man, they burnt him on the fire they had prepared, declaring to the affrighted assembly

that they would thus treat all Giaours who dared to presume to wear clothes such as the Turks.

"Many Christians here remember how the sight of their friends and neighbours hanging to the trees round the town was a very common spectacle.

"The then Governor-General of Bosnia, who is now alive at Constantinople, I believe, is said to have committed innumerable murders of this kind, and to have been the terror of the country."

In comparison with this kind and degree of savagery Consul Holmes admits "a vast general improvement," but insists that the "rapacity and corruption of the governing class keep the country in a state of penury and misery. No advance seems to be made in prosperity, education, or civilisation."

The last paragraphs of this excellent despatch of Consul Holmes contains a vigorous and discriminating protest against the smooth things which our Ministers at Constantinople had extracted from numerous Consuls, and which they were never tired of repeating whenever any complaints against Turkey came from others than themselves. I therefore give these paragraphs in full:—

"The last paragraph of your Excellency's despatch states that the Porte has shown a determination to establish an impartial treatment between Mussulmans and Christians, which the reports of her Majesty's Consuls from most parts of the Empire show to be fairly carried out. In this report I have spoken of the state of Bosnia, but I confess to your

Excellency that I am at loss to understand how it can be otherwise elsewhere, with few exceptions, and for the following reasons. I have a personal knowledge of Turkey since 1840, during which I have resided, more or less, at Erzeroom, Trebizond, Damascus, and Smyrna, I have been Acting-Consul at Samsoon, also Acting-Consul at Monastir, I have visited Aleppo, Beyrout, and Salonica, and I was Vice-Consul at Batoom six years, and Consul at Diarbekir eight years; and at all these places I found the same state of affairs, more or less modified, that I do here.

"Your Excellency may object that my experience dates from many years back, and I at once admit that many changes for the better may and probably have taken place since then; but at the same time I ask who and what the officials are who administer in all these different parts of the Empire;—are they not the same of whom I have had so long an experience? Are they not those who are here to-day, and in any of those parts to-morrow? And do not those who come here come from all those places? Do I not see, as formerly, Governor after Governor dismissed from one place for dishonesty or incapacity, and sent immediately to another? Do I not know these functionaries, very many personally, and nearly all by what their fellow-officials tell me? And can I imagine that they can change their characters and natures with their residence? If ever I inquire of a consular colleague, who comes from parts with which I was formerly well acquainted, the information of the state of affairs in

that quarter, it is exactly what I supposed it to be. Thus while I willingly admit, and indeed proclaim an immense general improvement everywhere since I first came to Turkey, yet I cannot understand how in most parts of the Empire the Sultan's excellent projects of reform are fairly carried out by a class of officials, all of whom, with very rare exceptions, I know to be thoroughly imbued with the same sentiments, habits, and traditions; and I do not ever recollect to have met with any fellow-consul in the Levant service, with any moderate experience of the Turkish Empire, who has not confirmed my experience by his own. At the same time, I believe that there are some few places where the governing class is obliged by force of circumstances to greatly modify its usual tendencies, where a consul with only the experience of such a locality would naturally form his opinion accordingly. There are also some able and comparatively honest governors and other officials, and their presence is always wonderfully productive of amelioration. Such gross instances of injustice and venality as I have related did not occur, to my knowledge, during Osman Pasha's administration; but, unfortunately, the very few good officials I have met with are rarely left long enough to effect any lasting change, and after a transient gleam of prosperity the country relapses into a new era of disorganisation and neglect."*

I have already drawn attention to the very different

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* Ibid, p. 52.

spirit which animates the reports of our Consuls when they are testifying spontaneously to the abuses which they saw and felt, and when the very same abuses were complained of by the rival agents of other Governments than their own. The contrast is sometimes almost ludicrous, and I regret to say that in no case is it more conspicuous than in some of the despatches of Consul Holmes. Of course, in the very nature of things there must always be innumerable false reports of particular cases of outrage and oppression in such a condition of things as that which he depicts to Sir H. Elliot, and therefore it must always be easy to contradict such reports, and to found upon them general accusations of exaggeration. But one would suppose that British Consuls who saw and knew the true character of Turkish government, as thus described by Consul Holmes, would be prepared to expect and to admit its inevitable effect both in producing discontent and disaffection among the people, and in attracting the active sympathy of those kindred and neighbouring populations which enjoyed a happier lot. But instead of any such "open vision" among our Consuls, they almost invariably take the side of the Turkish Government whenever any other European Power or population is concerned in making any complaint of those corruptions and abuses which prevail in Turkey. As an example of this contrast I cannot do better than give another despatch from Consul Holmes, dated less than two years after the

despatch already given.* It will be observed that the condition of things there described had then already led to those movements among Austrian and Russian Agencies, which never fail to rouse the vehement jealousies of our own :—

"Bosna-Seraï, March 24th, 1873.

"SIR,

"I have the honour to inform your Excellency that I have just had a conversation with the Governor-General of Bosnia regarding the policy of Austria and Russia in these countries at the present moment.

"For some time Austrian newspapers have been teeming with articles against Turkish rule in Bosnia, full of exaggeration and often pure invention. The Governor-General states that all the Austrian Consular Agents in the province have lately shown themselves particularly active in taking up the cause of Christians against Mussulmans, and doing everything possible to bring the Turkish Government into disrepute, and to create disaffection on the part of the Christians. At the same time, though the Austrian Government has endeavoured to bring about a rupture between Montenegro and the Porte, the Governor-General of Dalmatia, General Rodich, is constantly at Cettigné, doing his best to obtain the confidence and friendship of the mountaineers for his Government, and has lately accepted a Montenegrin decoration. Mustafa Assim Pasha's idea of the object

* Ibid, No. 44, p. 84.

of all this is that Austria is anxious to conciliate the Slaves under her rule, and is desirous of preoccupying their attention with the supposed evil condition of their co-religionists in Bosnia, and to gain credit for being altogether in sympathy with them, under the impression that she will thus cause them to modify and, perhaps, to forget their discontent towards herself. All the authorities in Austria, Slavonia, and Dalmatia, are now Slaves. The Austrian Consul-General has just gone to make a tour throughout his jurisdiction in Bosnia, and will probably stimulate the exertions of his agents.

"Russia also seems to be equally working to create difficulties and to show that these countries are in a state of disaffection. Some time ago a report was spread in the Herzegovina that emigration to Russia would be encouraged by that Government. A few persons applied to the Russian Consul at Ragusa to know if this were true, when the Consul wrote to his colleagues and gave out that the Consulate was besieged with applications for assistance to emigrate to Russia, and asking what it meant. Both his colleagues in the Herzegovina and Bosnia replied that they could not explain the matter and knew nothing about it, suggesting Austrian intrigue; but great publicity was given to the matter. The Governor-General tells me that his information distinctly goes to prove that the first intimation about emigration issued from the Russian Consulate at Mostar, and the Turkish Consul-General at Ragusa wrote to say that the obsession of the Russian Consulate at Ragusa was purely imaginary. As I before informed your

Excellency, the Prince of Montenegro has entirely ceased all correspondence with this Government, having been persuaded by the Russian Consul at Ragusa that his affairs will be much more efficaciously arranged at Constantinople under the protection of General Ignatiew.

"Mustafa Pasha thinks that Russian influence having slightly declined at Constantinople since the fall of Mahmoud Pasha, it is considered necessary by that Government to endeavour to create embarrassments here, so that, when necessary, the Turkish Government may be attacked about the wretchedly discontented condition of the Herzegovina and Bosnia. That there are, of course, many isolated cases of dissatisfaction it would be useless to deny, but that anything like general discontent prevails is not the fact."

In July of the same year, 1873, Consul Holmes was again compelled to deal with the same subject, in reporting the emigration of twenty-four respectable Christian merchants into Austrian Croatia; and here once more we have his testimony to the real condition of things, mingled with the most inconsistent and really irrational intimations that the disaffection of the people was ascribable to the intrigues of the external enemies of Turkey:—

"This matter will probably occupy the attention of the Slave journals in Servia and Austria, and I, therefore, think it right to make a few observations on the subject, which will enable your Excellency to form a correct idea of its nature.

"For a long time past the relations of the Christian merchants of the north of Bosnia in general, and the better class of Mussulmans, have been of a most unsatisfactory nature. These merchants are comparatively rich, and from their vicinity to Austria have acquired a more independent character than elsewhere, and they have thus in a corresponding degree awakened the jealousy and animosity of their Mussulman compatriots. There is no doubt, therefore, that they have been subjected to petty annoyances and small persecutions, for which they have been unable to obtain redress at the hands of the local authorities, and which have irritated them excessively. There is no doubt, however, that their complaints are exaggerated as to the importance and degree of these vexations, and their own conduct has also doubtless tended to exasperate the ill-will of the Turks towards them. I may here observe that the enmity of Bosniac Mohammedans is principally directed to the merchant or trading class of Christians, and is not at all exhibited in the same degree towards the peasant. The former class grows rich, has no interest in common with the Turk, and excites his jealousy; while the latter works for the Mohammedan landowners, and their interests are bound up together. This ill-feeling between the Christian trading classes in Bosnia and the Mussulman proprietors is excessive, and in a great measure has been caused and is fomented by local peculiarities. In other parts of Turkey there are Christian and Mohammedan populations, who live together in much more tolerable amity, and who, though the Turkish element is in the

ascendant, and the Christians suffer a certain amount of oppression in consequence, are not subject to the causes which in Bosnia tend to a degree of exasperation which is not to be met elsewhere. These causes are the vicinity of the various Slave populations of Austria, Servia, and Montenegro, who, independent of the Turks themselves, never cease, by writing in the public press, by emissaries, and by facility of personal intercourse, to excite the Christians to discontent by assuring them of their superior political and social position in comparison with their assumed miserable state, and who exasperate the Turks by exaggeration of every matter that occurs, and by threats, sometimes of annexation to Servia—sometimes of invasion, and by abuse of every possible kind. Now both Turks and Christians in Bosnia are equally ignorant and fanatical, and the result of all this is a state of things which is most deplorable, but for which it is difficult to see any remedy. The present Governor-General of Bosnia is an exceptionably good man, and does his utmost to prevent abuses and to administer justice, but what can he do? In similar cases when he requires information, and demands the truth from the local authorities, they unanimously reply that the Christians are wholly to blame; that they do all they can to disturb the public tranquillity, and that the Turks are perfectly innocent, and are, in fact, the victims of the animosity and intrigues of the Christians. If his Excellency, as in the present instance, sends a special Commissioner to inquire into matters, there is just as little hope of his learning the truth as before; for to people who know how these

affairs are managed in the provinces the process is certain. The Commissioner, like nearly all Turks in his position, considers his mission solely from the point of view of personal profit, and the course invariably followed by the local authorities, whose conduct is to be investigated, is at once to bribe the inquirer, and to prevent by every possible means his acquiring any information except what they desire to give him. This is the reason why the twenty-four Christian merchants of Graditchka, knowing that their adversaries, the local beys and authorities, will have it all their own way, and will endeavour to do them all the injury possible while they have no chance of justice, have for the present taken refuge in Austrian Croatia.

"The Governor-General is aware that matters in the north of Bosnia are not as they should be, and intends shortly going there in person; but I know from experience that every possible difficulty will also be thrown in the way of his acquiring any true knowledge of the state of affairs. He will doubtless learn more by his presence than otherwise; but even if his own good sense and knowledge of the ways of his co-religionists suggests a good idea of the truth, he will always find it almost impossible to act against the unanimous official statements of all the Government agents, which are certain in such cases to be against the Christians.

"Another vexatious affair has also just happened at a place called Varsar, near Yaïtza. The farm-house of a Mussulman there was attacked by brigands, and his wife carried off and murdered, on which it

appears, from several letters that have been received here, that the local authorities seized, ill-treated, and imprisoned all the Christian merchants of the place! The Pasha says he cannot conceive it possible, and has made inquiries. The result will be, of course, that the authorities and the Medjliss of that place will send a solemn declaration to the effect that nothing of the kind has happened; but, at the same time, it is difficult to imagine that peaceable traders, who have written to their friends here to say that they have been, and are still, suffering in prison, and begging them to take steps for their release, have entirely invented this story, however much they may have exaggerated it.

"How these things are to be prevented, even by the best possible Governor, it is difficult to imagine, as long as all his subordinate agents throughout the vilayet are, with few exceptions, the ordinary Turk, that is to say, venal, ignorant, fanatical, and untruthful, and whose interest it is to make common cause with the native Mussulmans against the trading class of Christians, and who, in fact, have no option in this course, as otherwise the Mussulman population would immediately conspire to obtain their removal; and in a country where no official, from the highest to the lowest, has the least confidence in the support of his Government, which he knows is only too glad to have a pretext, for obvious reasons, of changing its functionaries as often as possible, he looks simply to his own interests, and when these coincide with his natural predilections there can be no doubt about his conduct.

"His Excellency the Governor-General knows all this better than I do; he regrets it, and feels that in nine cases out of ten he is helpless to do what he would wish, and what his own sense of right and private knowledge would suggest, but he has to make the best of the matters as he finds them, and, unless invested with the powers of an autocrat, he can do little or nothing against the mass of official untruth, venality, and fanaticism he has to encounter.

"I have, &c."*

I have given these despatches at length for two reasons mainly—first, because they illustrate better than any others the influences under which our agents in the East habitually regard the affairs of Turkey, and which must be fully weighed in estimating the value of each separate despatch. And secondly, because these particular reports of Consul Holmes give us the information which was in the possession of our Foreign Office respecting the condition of those very Provinces where the insurrection began in 1875-6.

I proceed now to give also some specimens of the reports from other Consuls on the condition of other portions of the Turkish Empire.

In the course of 1872-3 there had been various reports of a revival of religious fanaticism among Mohammedans generally, in the East. A Circular had

* Ibid. No. 51, p. 92-3.

been addressed from the Embassy at Constantinople to the various Consuls; and the reply of Mr. Stuart from Janina gives a graphic account of the state of Epirus in 1873. This report is the more valuable as, from the nature of the inquiry to which the Consul replies, he is led to lay stress on the fundamental facts of Islamism as the real root of the irreparable barbarism of Turkey:—

"That any new movement exists among the Mussulmans in these parts, partaking of the character of a religious and political revival, cannot perhaps with strict accuracy be asserted, because the policy of the Turks, in respect to the Mussulmans, though more or less modified from time to time, has never been essentially changed. The Christians here still suffer, and now in an increased degree, all the hardships set forth in the Consular Reports published in 1867, on the condition of the Christians in Turkey. Those hardships are of various kinds; a few of them need to be noticed here. To begin with, I select one of the greatest, namely, the inequality between Christian and Mussulman before the law.

"Notwithstanding the alleged reforms about which so much has been said and written, this inequality was never more strikingly and openly illustrated than it is at present in the daily practice of the so-called courts of justice. The rights of Christians, when opposed to the claims of Mussulmans, are, in contempt of all law and equity, utterly ignored. This would seem to be the case chiefly in the matter of landed property, with regard to which

an opinion widely prevails that a systematic policy is at work to withdraw the possession of it, whenever an opportunity can be found, from Christians, and vest it in the hands of Mussulmans. Numerous instances of this proceeding could be cited; indeed, so common have they become, that Christians are now unwilling to purchase land, and those of them who hold property of the kind are in constant fear of their rights being assailed, and, however valid, of being set aside by an arbitrary verdict.

"This proceeding is of recent date, and the object of it is, I think, evident. In every country the possession of land confers a certain degree of local weight and influence, but especially in Turkey, where there is but little property besides land, with its stock and produce. A few years ago, the Christians here were largely buying up the estates of needy and thriftless Mussulmans. It would appear that Government became jealous of the status they were thus acquiring; at any rate, about four years ago, they began to meet with unusual difficulties as bidders for land; their offers were declined without any apparent reason, their negotiations were broken off or frustrated, and they themselves, in fact, to a great extent, excluded from the market. This system still continues, and with increasing force; nay, more, a good many of the purchases previously made from Mussulmans have been cancelled, and the lands restored to their former owners.

"Now all this is, I conceive, evidence of a fixed intention to keep back the Christian.

"The old grievance about Christian evidence is

still there; from the Mehkemé such evidence is excluded. In the other courts it is ostensibly received; but how is it treated when opposed to a Mussulman? The Christian witness is subjected to severe and harassing cross-examination, and if he makes the least slip he is rejected with contumely as false; on the other hand, the simple statement of the Mussulman is accepted, without question or remark, as true. Hence the equality of Christian and Mussulman evidence is a mere catch-word, and has never been anything else.

"In the composition of the courts of law, as well as in that of the administrative councils (Tidjaret Medjliss), an important change has been made within the last two years, which change must of course have emanated from the same authority that sanctioned their creation in 1867. Originally, the elected members consisted of equal numbers of Mussulmans and non-Mussulmans; by the change in question, the Mussulman members are more by one than the others collectively, which, together with the president and *ex officio* members, reduces the non-Mussulman element almost to a nonentity; such it is practically.

"I have dwelt thus at length on this head because, in the East, when class distinctions are intended, their operation is generally very manifest in the local tribunals.

"The Mussulmans of Epirus are, for the most part, Albanians, and some of them are lawless enough. With that notion of superiority inculcated by their religion, they are, in general, overbearing to Chris-

tians, even to their own relations who still hold to the faith of their common ancestors. Acts of violence towards Christians and of spoliation are not unfrequently heard of. Such acts would, in other countries, be set down simply as crimes and misdemeanors. Here they acquire another character, from the fact that, being committed by Mussulmans on Christians, they are almost connived at by the Government authorities; whereas the same authorities are but too quick in punishing with severity a Christian accused—I do not say convicted—of violence to a Mussulman.

"In the matter of taxes, the last farthing is wrung from the Christian; time and indulgence are granted to the Mussulman. The Christian defaulter is handed over to the rigour of the law; the Mussulman is mildly dealt with and easily let off. But it is needless multiplying cases of partial dealing. A long series of them could be mentioned, and instances in proof, if called for, adduced. Enough, however, has been said to show that the Government authorities do not, in practice recognise the principle, so ostentatiously put forward by the Turks and their advocates, of equality between the Mussulman and the Christian subjects of the Sultan.

"But, in point of fact, this principle is utterly inadmissible under a Mussulman Government, because it is directly opposed to precepts of the Koran. Whatever the Koran enjoins, the Mussulman must, come of it what may, adhere to. A force greater than allegiance to the Sovereign, or than fear or respect of man, impels him to it. And though few

Mussulmans can read the Koran, they are all taught that it is the charter of a religion which raises them above all other men, while it holds out to them, if not in this life, in the next, the boundless enjoyment of all that human flesh, in its wildest imaginings, can desire. Believing with fervid devotion in that extraordinary book, their habits of thought, feeling, reasoning, and action, their whole life, moral, social, and political, are moulded to its doctrines. Who would know something of Mussulman character must first study the Koran.

"But the relations into which the Turks have been drawn with powerful nations of another faith and civilisation have obliged them, conscious as they are of their decaying strength, to simulate a liberality of sentiment at variance with the rigid exclusiveness of their religion. Awed by those powerful nations, which they equally fear as friends and foes, they made concessions in 1856, which are embodied in the famous document known by the name of the Hatti-Humayoum. Given with protestations of sincerity, and accepted in good faith, that document was, no doubt, at first highly beneficial to the Christians, and continued to be so for some time. But some of the chief concessions were never assented to by the Ulemah. Consequently, as time wore on, means were devised of rendering them null and void. And, though they still exist on paper, and may again be as triumphantly appealed to as they were by Fuad Pasha in 1867, they are now, in Epirus at least, as dead a letter as if they had never been penned. Add to this the improvements pro-

mised by the vilayet system, introduced here in 1867, have never been realised. And here in Epirus, at this moment as much as five-and-twenty years ago, the Mussulman is taught by the ruling authorities to believe in his superiority; the non-Mussulman, but especially the Christian, in his inferiority.

"This state of things may, perhaps, be characterised as a religious and political revival. But, after all, it is only the natural action of the strong principle upon which the Turkish system of Government is founded.

"The Christians believe that still harder times for them are at hand. So do the Jews, and they are a keen-sighted people.

"The population of Epirus is decreasing at a very rapid rate. Inquiries made in 1861 led me to set it down at a loose approximation of—

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|---|---|
| Christians ... ... ... ... | 220,000 |
| Mussulmans ... ... ... ... | 130,000 |
| Total ... | 350,000 |

"There is good reason for believing that these figures may now be reduced to—

| | |
|---|---|
| Christians ... ... ... ... | 180,000 |
| Mussulmans ... ... ... ... | 90,000 |
| Total ... | 270,000 |

"At the same time poverty and misery are frightfully on the increase.

"Now, these facts are well known to the Government, and may help to account for the increased anxiety shown to uphold the dominant, and keep

down the subject, faith. Agreeing with this are the periodical visits of foreign dervishes to these parts. These visits were formerly very rare. Since 1864 they recur every three or four years, when dervishes, to the number of twenty-five or thirty, meet at Janina, as delegates from different parts of the Mussulman world. After a stay here of uncertain duration they break up, traverse, singly or in twos or threes, the Mussulman districts, and then quit the country. A conference of the kind has taken place here this summer, and the dervishes are now in circuit in Albania.

"It is well known that these dervishes are ordered here on a religious mission; as a fruit of their preaching the Mussulmans are always colder and more distant in their bearing towards Christians.

"The Mussulmans of Janina, I may add, have the character of being very zealous for their religion.

"In forming a judgment on the policy of the Government in the matter in question it must be remembered that the Mussulmans own these regions by the right of conquest, and to them the common right of conquerors must be conceded, of holding and ruling the subject territories as long as they can. An iron religion dictates one way of doing this—repression. The united voice of Christian Europe urges another —concession. The dilemma is a hard one. To the latter, who often ignore religion in the matter of politics, they dare not say with the Apostles of old, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.' This, nevertheless, among themselves, is the determining

argument; they say, 'God, who gave us these countries, can, if He pleases, enable us to hold them. If we are to lose them, His will be done. But, happen what will, we must follow the commandments of His Prophet. At the same time we must try as long as we can to keep up appearances with the Giaours; promise anything, and boldly affirm the execution of the promises; deception is lawful with the Giaours.'

"These are the political maxims of the whole body of the Ulemah, and, I believe, of a very large section of the Mussulman population, notably of the party called 'Young Turkey.' And these maxims are now in operation in Epirus.

(Signed) "R. STUART."

Janina, September 19th, 1873.*

It will be observed that in this very important despatch from Consul Stuart there are clear indications not only of the hopelessness of reform, but of a distinct tendency in the condition of things to become worse. The same evidence comes from many other quarters. In Syria, it is reported by the Consul Green, writing from Damascus in September, 1873,† by whom it is ascribed partly to the political submergence of France. "In Syria," he says, "the disasters of France have been diligently held up as a providential interference on behalf of Mohammedanism." Moreover, the same Consul indicates it as his opinion

* Ibid. No. 63, p. 102. † Ibid., p. 105.

that this reaction against the Christians was really encouraged by the Government of the Sultan :—

"It is my belief, shared in, I think, by most of those who are frequently brought into contact with the local authorities of Damascus, that there is a determination on their part to make apparent to the public that foreign and native Christian influences are to give way before Mohammedanism ; and my knowledge of Turkish officials does not lead me to imagine that they would venture to adopt such a course without being prompted from higher quarters. My recent reports have informed your Lordship of the public acts and declarations of the Governor-General against Christians and foreigners, and his Excellency's late attempt to prevent her Majesty's Vice-Consulate from exercising jurisdiction over certain Mohammedan British Indian subjects was made under direct instructions from the Porte."*

The uniform tenor of these Reports from all parts of the Turkish Empire is remarkable. And from no part of that Empire were they so detailed, so circumstantial, or so condemnatory, as from that very part of the European Provinces in which the coming tragedy was about to begin.

The disposition which Consul Holmes has shown since the late troubles began, and since the conduct of the Turkish Government became matter of formal complaint by the other Powers of Europe, to defend

* Ibid. No. 64, p. 105.

that Government as far as it was possible to do so, and to ascribe all local discontent to foreign intrigue, renders doubly valuable such evidence as we have from him, at a time when that evidence was comparatively free from bias. And still more important is the language held at the same time by Sir Henry Elliot. In October, 1873, he referred Lord Granville to the "very able reports of the Consul Holmes as conveying as accurate a description of the state of the case as can be obtained."* Moreover Sir H. Elliot summed up in the same despatch his own impression not only of the accounts he received from this particular Consul, but generally from all parts of the Turkish Empire, and his summary is in these words :— "Almost all her Majesty's Consuls concurred in reporting that the nominal equality of Mussulmans and Christians before the law, which had never thoroughly existed in practice, was now, in most Provinces, more illusory than it had been a few years ago."†

I shall conclude these extracts from the official information which was in the possession of our Government, when the contest began in 1876, by a remarkable paragraph in the Report of Mr. Consul Longworth, dated Belgrade, September, 1873.‡ It is in reply to a Circular issued by our Foreign Office, inquiring of its Agents as to the truth of a reported

* Ibid. No. 74, p. 118.

† Ibid. No. 74, p. 118.

‡ Ibid. No. 76, p. 127.

revival of Mussulman fanaticism all over the East. Mr. Consul Longworth has not for many years resided in the Provinces under direct Turkish administration, and for this reason perhaps his despatches generally abound in the most favourable representations of the Turkish Government. But in this despatch, there is a passage which states so fairly the leading circumstances and effects of the Crimean war, and gives such important testimony as to the deeply-seated causes of the failure of the Turkish Government to fulfil the engagements under which it came to Europe, that it is well worth being reproduced in full:—

"The last war in the East was originally stirred up by sectarian controversies between the Greek and Latin Churches; the battle in the first instance raged, with the Turks as sole moderators, in the Holy Sepulchre itself; when peace was finally concluded, the conditions, through the influence of Great Britain, turned mainly on a confirmation of the privileges already granted to the Christians of Turkey. From these it was inferred that every ground of hostility on the side of the Christian Powers had been removed. The reforms, judicial and administrative, announced in the Edict of Gul Hani, were extended and confirmed in the Hatti-Humayoun; copies of which having been formally communicated to the Representatives of the Christian Powers, it was annexed to the Treaty of Paris, and became thus embodied in the public law of Europe. In this

manner the Porte on the one side, and the European Governments on the other, incurred obligations, by which they were respectively bound. These will, I fear, not be found to have been scrupulously fulfilled on either side. As regards the Porte, it was scarcely to have been expected that conditions inferring a reversal of their law, derived from the Koran, should have been rigorously carried out, both in spirit and letter; at any rate that this should be done, without active participation on the part of the allied Powers, at whose hands, under the circumstances, both initiative and friendly pressure was, if only as a proof of their interest in the matter, naturally to be looked for. The results obtained at a former period could never have been realised by so lukewarm a policy as that acted upon since. The admissibility, for instance, of Christian evidence in Turkish Tribunals, perhaps the most essential point conceded, has never to this time been sufficiently provided for, the reason for this, as I stated in a former despatch, was satisfactorily accounted for by a Kadi, or Turkish Judge, belonging to the Corps of Ulema, or Law-Officers of Turkey. He informed me that this important innovation in their law had never been sanctioned by the Sheikh ul Islam, who is considered the chief of it. If instead of restricting the application of the new statutes to the mixed provincial courts of the Empire the Porte had insisted on its adoption in the Court of Kadi, it had in that case have been looked upon and respected as the law of the land. As matters stand, however, to this day this important modification is ignored by the entire legal body; and

I was assured by the Kadi in question, whose authority was of great weight, that this new provision of the law could never be enforced till those whose duty it was to execute it should be duly authorised by the Sheikh ul Islam; and he believed that if the Porte wished to exercise a proper control every difficulty would be removed."

It will be observed that in this report of Mr. Consul Longworth, there is a passage which implies that a "lukewarm policy," in enforcing on the Porte the duty and necessity of reform, had supervened upon the activity of some former period, during which better results had been obtained.

This observation and the reflection which it implies brings me to a very important part of the subject, namely, the conduct of successive Governments in England since 1856 in their action with the Porte, and especially in the performance of that duty which devolved upon them towards the subject populations of Turkey.

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE CONDUCT OF THE EUROPEAN POWERS TOWARDS THE PORTE FROM 1856 TO 1875.

I HAVE already pointed out that the interpretation of the 9th Article of the Treaty of Paris is wholly erroneous which represents it as an admission on the part of the Christian Powers that they had no right to demand the fulfilment, or to resent the violation, of the assurances which the Porte was required to give in regard to the reform of its administration. As a member of the Cabinet which was responsible for that Article, I must express my opinion that any such admission would have been not only a folly but a crime. There is nothing in the wording of the Article to justify such an interpretation, and there is everything to condemn it both in the Treaty as a whole, and in the transactions which preceded it. Nevertheless, the 9th Article had a very definite and practical signification—namely this, that Turkey was to be entrusted with the fulfilment of her own promises, and that the European Powers did not, as indeed they could not, make themselves responsible for Turkish administration. Yet this, and nothing short of this, would have been the result of any formal and authoritative right of interference in that administra-

tion. The result is that "interference" in the shape of remonstrance, or of warning, as well as in the shape of friendly counsel and advice, was the duty of the European Powers, so long as it was possible to hope for success; whilst in the event of all such hope being plainly illusory, those Powers, each and all of them, were free to take their own course, not only under the contingencies contemplated by the Treaty, but also in the supreme case which no Treaty can provide for—namely, the case of its whole purpose being completely thwarted by the Power it was intended to protect.

It is obvious that the power of any Government to act upon the conduct of the Porte, under a system such as this, must depend very much on the ability of its local agents. So long as the British Government continued to be represented at Constantinople by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe it was able to bring to bear upon the conduct of Turkish administration all the salutary influence which could not fail to arise from the powerful character of that most able and venerable man. Consul Longworth's allusion to a "lukewarm policy" as having marked our late policy is probably an allusion to the undoubted fact that Lord Stratford's successors were by no means on a level with himself. And yet there is no reason to believe that either successive Secretaries of State or successive Ambassadors at Constantinople failed to warn, to remonstrate, or to rebuke the Porte for its

increasing misconduct and corruption. It may be well, therefore, to look into such evidence as is afforded by official documents on this very important question—how far, during the twenty years from 1856 to 1876, we have been discharging as best we could the obligations imposed upon us by the very responsible course we took in upholding, under hopes of its reform, the Government of the Sultan.

During these twenty years the Seals of the Foreign Office were held by Lord Clarendon, by Lord Russell, by Lord Derby, and by Lord Granville; whilst the Embassy at Constantinople was filled in succession by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, by Lord Lyons, by Sir H. Bulwer (created Lord Dalling), and lastly by Sir Henry Elliot.

At the very moment when the Treaties of 1856 were being framed, and before they had been actually signed, we have a despatch from Lord Clarendon to Lord Stratford,* which not only asserts broadly both the right and the duty of the Guaranteeing Powers to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey, but asserts it as a necessary consequence of the whole transactions which had taken place, and of the whole arrangements which were about to be completed :—

"Foreign Office, February 18, 1856.

"With reference to the question of religious persecutions in Turkey, and the efforts which your

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 8, p. 5.

Excellency, as stated in your despatch of the 28th of January, very properly continues to make to effect the abolition of the punishment of death as applied to apostates from Islamism, I have to state to your Excellency that her Majesty's Government are of opinion that it might be strongly represented to the Porte that, as the Turkish Empire is by Treaty stipulations to be declared part and parcel of the European system, it is quite impossible for the Powers of Europe to acquiesce in the continuance in Turkey of a law and a practice which is a standing insult to every other nation in Europe. If Turkey is to gain the great and important advantage of being deemed part of the European family of nations, she must by necessity adapt her laws and practices so as to make them compatible with her association with the community of States into which she desires to be admitted.

"I am, &c.,

(Signed) "CLARENDON."

Nor, in practice, was our interference limited to matters of such gravity as the law which punished with death converts to Christianity. Interference was the rule and not the exception. In nothing was it more constant than in regard to the financial condition of Turkey. Childish extravagance is a characteristic of all semi-barbarous Governments, and in the case of Turkey it comes under the daily notice of our ministers as one of the causes of financial embarrassment and political decline. Yet often it came under that notice in forms which rendered it a difficult and a delicate task

to remonstrate. Nevertheless we find that in May, 1857, Lord Clarendon directed Lord Stratford to remonstrate with the Grand Vizier on the profuse expenditure on the marriages of the Sultan's daughters. And yet this interference did not arise from mere desire to meddle. On the contrary, it was recognised as in itself an evil, and only to be justified by necessity.

Two years later Lord Russell took occasion to advert to the danger to the Porte involved in the very fact of our frequent interference, however friendly the motive might be, and gave a signal proof of the desire we had to restrain it within due limits, in the following despatch to Sir Henry Bulwer:—

"Foreign Office, August 9, 1859.

"I have read with great interest your various despatches respecting reforms in Turkey.

"I willingly leave to your judgment the choice of the time and the order of introducing these reforms to the notice of the Sultan's ministers.

"There is one point, however, which I am anxious to press on your attention.

"Each consul, as you rightly observe, is eager to press his own view on the Pasha of his jurisdiction; if he succeeds he raises his country's reputation and perhaps his own; but he weakens the authority of the Porte, and excites jealousy among the other consuls of Christian Powers.

"It is very desirable to introduce regularity and concert in making these laudable efforts. If each consul were, unless in very urgent cases, to report to

his own ambassador or minister at Constantinople, and if the ambassadors were to communicate in a friendly manner to each other respecting an ill-governed district, and frequent outrages on justice, they would have a better claim to be attended to than the separate consuls can hope to establish by their desultory efforts. A good understanding with your colleagues of France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia is very desirable.

"If any of these should evince a reluctance to co-operate with you, you should endeavour to unite the others who are willing to join with you.

"If you are thwarted in these attempts at conciliation, inform me, that I may apply a remedy by friendly remonstrance with those Courts which are so ill-represented.

"I wish to make it clear to the Sublime Porte that these reforms are not urged with a view to increase British influence, or any other foreign influence, but with a sincere desire to render Turkey a fit member of that European system to which she is acknowledged to belong, to increase her prosperity, and to provide for the better security and contentment of the Sultan's subjects of all creeds.

"I am, &c.,

(Signed) "J. RUSSELL."

Nothing could be better than the spirit of this advice. Its whole object was to keep up a practical concert between the Great Powers in the work of reforming the Turkish Government, and to repress those jealousies and suspicions of each other's motives which were the great obstacles to any effective co-operation.

We pass on two years, and then we come to a crucial instance of the understanding of the Christian Powers, as regards their own rights and duties of interference in the internal affairs of Turkey. In 1860 the massacres in the Lebanon attracted the attention and shocked the susceptibilities of Europe. The Porte, as usual, promised inquiry, punishment of the guilty, and reform. Here is the first clear indication of the spirit in which the British Government deemed itself entitled and bound to deal with this Turkish method of proceeding. It is in a despatch from Lord Russell to Sir H. Bulwer, of January 17, 1861 :*—

"Foreign Office, January 17, 1861.

". . . . The Ottoman Ambassador called upon me at the Foreign Office yesterday, and said he supposed that at the end of the three months her Majesty's Government would ask at Constantinople for an account of what the Grand Vizier intended to do. I said an account, not of what he intended to do, but of what he had done. The time is past when mere vague promises, little known at Constantinople, and neither known nor regarded in the provinces, can satisfy the European Powers.

"You will take care constantly to impress this view upon the Grand Vizier and Aali Pasha. Her Majesty's Government wish to see not theories of amendment, but practical reforms.

"I am, &c.,

(Signed) "J. RUSSELL."

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 55, p. 22.

All experience has proved that this is the only language which Turks can understand. But it is much more important to observe that the course of action which followed this despatch is the only course of action which has ever practically succeeded in effecting administrative reforms in Turkey. There was an European intervention. Every diplomatic form of courtesy was indeed observed towards the Sultan. His Majesty's concurrence was affirmed throughout, but his Government was given to understand that certain things must be done. To see that they were done a French army was landed in Syria, and an European Commission was sent to the same country to arrange and organise its future Government.

On this Commission the British Government was represented by Lord Dufferin, whose rare and many gifts in the management of men, and in the conduct of difficult and delicate affairs, have since been displayed with conspicuous advantage to the Empire in the Queen's North American dominions. The result was the establishment of the principle that the Sultan was to be restrained, under the authority of Europe, in the exercise of his sovereignty over the districts in which he had failed to maintain peace and order. In the administration of justice the notoriously corrupt decisions of Turkish Courts were set aside. Culprits whom they had acquitted were tried again, in violation of every principle applicable to international dealings with the administration of an independent Sovereign.

Capital punishments were insisted upon by Foreign authority. In the vital matter of the choice of Governors, a power inseparable from the full rights of sovereignty, and which can never be surrendered without serious derogation to them, the Guaranteeing Powers, and not the Sultan, were to constitute the supreme authority. Moreover, in the exercise of this authority the doctrine was admitted that a Mohammedan could not be safely entrusted with the administration of a district of which the population was mainly Christian. It is satisfactory to know that complete success attended the application of this doctrine. The appointment of a Christian Governor in the Lebanon was followed by a period of tranquillity so great that life and property became as secure as in any part of Europe.

This intervention of Europe in the affairs of Syria is a perfect example of the principles on which the European Protectorate over Turkey can alone be exercised with any decent regard to justice, or to those general interests which it was intended to defend.

Lord Russell laid down the principle of our Protectorate broadly in a despatch to Sir H. Bulwer, dated September 13th, 1860:—"The Treaty of 1856 contemplated the substitution of a collective Protectorate of the Five Powers on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte in place of an exclusive Protectorate by one Power alone, which is in that Treaty expressly renounced and abolished."

The intervention in Syria was preceded by Conferences in Paris, in which the Powers agreed among themselves to "declare in the most formal manner that the contracting Powers do not intend to seek for, and will not seek for, in the execution of their engagements, any territorial advantages, any exclusive influence, or any concession with regard to the commerce of their subjects, and which could not be granted to the subjects of all other nations."* The Protocol of the 3rd August, 1860, in which this declaration was recorded, is further remarkable for a fresh intimation on the part of the European Powers of the sense in which they understood the obligations undertaken by the Porte in the Ninth Article of the Treaty of Paris. It has been pretended that the mere communication to the Powers of the firman providing for the liberties of the Christian populations did not constitute any "promise" which those Powers were entitled to enforce. But in this Protocol of 1860 there is a special paragraph, as if intended to give an authoritative contradiction to this representation of the facts. The Plenipotentiaries assembled in Paris for the "Pacification of Syria" say, "they cannot refrain from expressing the value which their respective Courts attach to the fulfilment of the solemn promises of the Sublime Porte, that serious administrative measures should be taken to ameliorate the

* Hertslet's Map of Europe by Treaty, vol. ii. No. 321, p. 1452.

condition of the Christian populations of every creed in the Ottoman Empire."

The jealousy of the Porte, and the difficulties arising out of the obstructions which that Government knows so well how to place in the way of every effective measure of reform, succeeded in restricting the experiment tried in Syria to the particular district where the worst massacres had taken place. But the British Government did not fail to make the whole transaction an opportunity for addressing to Turkey a warning which went much beyond the particular occasion. In a despatch of September 24, 1861,* Lord Russell addressed Sir H. Bulwer as follows:—

"There is one danger, however, which you must seriously impress upon the Sultan and the Grand Vizier.

"It appears but too evident that the horrible massacres which took place last year in Syria were the effect not so much of the unbridled ferocity of the Druses, or the concealed purposes of the Maronites, as of the deliberate apathy and calculated indifference of the Turkish officials.

"Damascus, Deir-el-Kamor, Hasbeya, were the theatres of massacres which might have been prevented by a vigilant Government.

"Let the Sultan recollect that the protection of the lives and properties of his subjects, the maintenance of order, the right dispensation of criminal justice are the first duties of a sovereign.

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 73, p. 28.

"To the neglect of those duties the Ottoman Government owes the foreign occupation by the European Powers in the Convention of Paris. Let the Porte take warning by that occupation.

"A wanton violation of the rights, or an unprovoked invasion of the territory of the Porte by any European sovereign, would be at once resisted by other Powers, of which Great Britain would be the foremost. But the public opinion of Europe would not approve of a protection accorded to the Porte in order to prevent the signal punishment of a Government which should allow without interference the mass of a Christian community to be murdered and its remnant to sue without effect the tribunals which ought to administer justice and the authorities which are bound to maintain internal peace.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) "RUSSELL."

It cannot, I think, be justly said, so long as the British Government were giving to the Porte such warnings as this, that it was failing in the duties devolving upon it as one of the principal Powers engaged in the Crimean war, and one of the principal Signatories of the Treaties of 1856. I have given here only a few out of many more. They were supported and enforced by innumerable communications of a similar character from our Ambassadors at Constantinople, and every Consul in his own area of action, had similar remonstrances to make, and similar influences to resist.

The next very prominent event which brought the

affairs of Turkey under public notice in England was the Cretan insurrection in 1867. It arose, like all other insurrections in Turkey, out of the standing antagonisms of race, out of the chronic vices of Turkish Administrations, and out of the never-failing sympathies of neighbouring populations with the desire of the Christians to achieve their independence. The Turkish Government encountered the insurrection with the weapons to which they always resort—with levies of those irregular troops which have acquired a proverbial infamy under the name of Bashi-Bazouks.

The duty and the policy of the Guaranteeing Powers, in the case of such insurrections as that of Crete, is by no means a very simple question, and depends on a great variety of circumstances affecting each particular case. There is, of course, one general proposition applicable to them all. It was no part of the undertaking of the Allies, and no part of their policy, to guarantee Turkey against the natural consequences of her own maladministration, or against the disaffection which arises out of almost every peculiarity of her dominion over the Christian races So much is universally admitted. But more than this. Knowing, as all the European Cabinets do know the general character of Turkish rule, and knowing also that it was being maintained by them against external enemies on general considerations of policy, it is their uniform duty to procure, if they can, the redress of grievances, and to restrain the vindictive-

ness of Turkish power. Our Ministers and Ambassadors have never failed in this duty, so far as moral influence is concerned. Nor did they fail in the exercise of their influence in the particular case of the Cretan insurrection. But there is another duty incumbent on the Guaranteeing Powers which was not denied, but, on the contrary, was fully admitted in principle, by the British Cabinet in 1867. That duty is to use not only their influence, but, if necessary, their power to prevent—in so far as they can prevent—the work of repressing actual insurrection from being conducted with systematic barbarity. This may be said, in the language of jurists, to be a duty of "imperfect obligation." That is to say, it is a duty the urgency of which depends on the opportunity afforded for its discharge, and on the kind and degree of barbarity with which we may be called to deal. All civil wars are more or less savage; and those which are aggravated by such enmities as prevail between the Turks and their Christian subjects cannot be waged without many incidents shocking to humanity. And if we do not prevent them altogether, we can only interfere in extreme cases, and in cases where interference can be effective.

Now it did so happen that in the case of the Cretan insurrection, there was an accumulation of circumstances which put us under the highest measure of obligation which can attach to this kind of duty. Over and above the general claims upon us which the

Cretans had, along with all the Christian populations subject to a Government which we sustain, they had a special claim peculiar to themselves. During the long contests of diplomacy and of arms, which finally led to the establishment of the Greek Kingdom, it had been proposed that Crete should be liberated from the Turkish yoke, and made part of that Kingdom. Although this proposal was unfortunately abandoned, yet during the operations conducted by the Christian Powers against Turkey, the Cretans had been indirectly encouraged and aided in their endeavours to establish their independence, and so successful had they been in the struggle on which they embarked, that in 1830 they had driven the Turks from every part of the Island, with the exception of a few of the fortified towns. When the Powers ultimately determined to allow Turkey to reconquer the Island, they felt bound to make some provision for the liberties of the Cretan population, and accordingly the constitutional privileges which were then granted to Crete were given under arrangement between Turkey and the Allies. It is obvious that a special right and duty of protection arose necessarily out of these transactions. Even if there had been no serious grievances to justify insurrection in 1867, and if the war had arisen simply out of the desire of the population to re-establish their independence, we had a good right and it was our duty to require that the contest should be conducted by the Porte in a manner consistent with

the usages of civilised nations. But the reports of our Consuls on the island, and of our Ambassador, Lord Lyons, at Constantinople, left no room for doubt that the insurgents had real grievances, and that our representatives encountered the usual difficulties in getting the Turkish Government to deal honestly or seriously with the abuses of their administration.

Under such circumstances the true policy would have been the policy which was pursued in Syria—namely, intervention on the part of the Guaranteeing Powers, to insist on the redress of real grievances, and such reforms in the administration as would insure the execution of them. Such, accordingly, was the opinion expressed in 1867, not only by the Russian Ambassador in London, but also by the French Government, and Lord Stanley (now Lord Derby), who was then our Foreign Minister, did not contest the general principle: "I agreed with him (Baron Brunnow) in principle, as to the expediency of joint action among the Three Powers, in the event of necessity for such action arising."* Lord Stanley, in the same despatch, went on to define, as follows, the circumstances under which he thought intervention might be justified:—"I could not deny the possibility of such occurrences, but said it did not seem to me possible to refuse to the Porte the right which every

* Parl. Pap., Cretan Insurrection, 1867, p. 39.

State possessed of putting down insurrection by armed force, provided the use of force did not degenerate into mere brutality."

Unfortunately, this is precisely the "degeneracy" which did actually take place. The Turkish Government, as usual, did not restrict itself to the use of its regular army. It had recourse to levies of Albanians and other half-savage tribes—Bashi-Bazouks—who conducted the war with all the savage ferocity which is their invariable characteristic, murdering men, women, and children. Full information as to the employment of these troops was given to our Government by Lord Lyons, and by our Consuls. Between five and six thousand of Albanian and other mercenaries were reported as having been landed in Crete; and our minister at Athens further warned the Government that a bitter feeling towards all Christians was displayed even by some Egyptian troops employed by the Porte. Moreover, our Government was informed that the Mussulman authorities were taking steps to secure their own women and children from retaliatory measures on the part of the insurgents. It was under these circumstances that the British Government was petitioned to allow our ships of war to carry off such Christian families as might reach the shore. This request was absolutely refused. No permission even was given to our officers by land or sea to exercise their own discretion according to the circumstances of the case.

The ruthless destruction of non-combatants, the murder of women and children, was thus treated as one of those legitimate risks of war which it was inconsistent with "neutrality" to prevent. Most fortunately this monstrous doctrine did not commend itself to Lord Lyons, and he had sent instructions to Consul Dickson not only to urge on the Turkish authorities to take, but also to himself take, "every feasible and proper measure to save the women and children not only from insult and injury, but also from hunger and cold."* Consul Dickson had accordingly arranged with the commander of a British gunboat to take off or to relieve such Christian families as might reach the coast, when the instructions of the Government arrived that no such measures should be taken. With a courage and firmness which cannot be too highly praised, Consul Dickson determined to disobey this order. Facts had come to his knowledge which, in his opinion, rendered obedience impossible. Commander Pym, with his gunboat, was directed to cruise round the western and south-western coasts of the Island, and by this officer between 300 and 400 women and children and other non-combatants were rescued and removed to Greece. The conduct of Consul Dickson in this matter stands out in all the stronger light from the dark background of the policy of the Foreign Office. In the interval the British Cabinet again deliberately

* Parl. Pap., 1867, p. 97.

refused to prevent the worst brutalities of barbaric warfare from being carried on by a Government which we were supporting. And when the gallant conduct of Consul Dickson came before the Government they gave to that conduct a reluctant and grudging condonation. This condonation was accompanied by an intimation that, unless with the direct sanction of the Turkish authorities, such proceedings could not be defended, and by another intimation, indirect but intelligible, that it was not to be done again. In this matter it is remarkable that the British Government was a great deal more Turkish than the Turkish Government itself. Lord Lyons reported that the Porte made no remonstrance whatever to him against the proceedings of Commander Pym. It is not less remarkable that none of the other civilised Governments of the world had any share of the responsibility of declining the offices of common humanity towards the victims of the Turkish soldiery; and it is the saddest of all comments upon the conduct of our Government at this time that those honourable duties which were withheld from the Queen's naval officers, were handed over, as a great escape, to an American squadron. The following sentence of a despatch from the British Government, dated January 23rd, 1868, is very unpleasant reading:—

"In reply I have to acquaint you that even if her Majesty's Government had seen reason to alter the decision which has already been communicated to

you, in regard to the removing of refugees, the necessity of further doing so would now appear to be much less required, inasmuch as they learn from Lord Lyons, that the Greek Minister at Constantinople had been informed by the United States Minister, that all Refugees, who may present themselves, will be received on board the ships of the American squadron, which has been ordered to Candia for that purpose."*

These dealings of the British Government with the questions arising out of the Cretan Insurrection are remarkable in several points of view. They are the first indications of that abandonment of our duties towards the subject populations of Turkey, which has been one main cause of the late bloody war. And I am bound to add that although the Government of the day was primarily responsible, there is no political party in the country which can claim any credit for a higher sense of duty, or for a wiser appreciation of policy in the matter. The unpopularity of the Greek Kingdom in this country, and the impression prevailing, that the rising in Crete was chiefly due to its agency, contributed to check the natural sympathies of the British people with the insurgents. The details of the conduct of our Government in refusing even to aid the escape of helpless non-combatants, were not known at the time, and were only disclosed

* Cretan Insurrection, p. 167.

when Papers were presented to Parliament. But, as usual, this was only done when the whole affair was a thing of the past. It was the perusal of these Papers which first aroused my own attention to the new tendencies of policy, which were being developed on the Eastern Question. These appeared to me to involve a complete misunderstanding of the nature of our duties and obligations towards the subject populations of Turkey, even in cases where we might determine to allow its Government to suppress particular rebellions. They were tendencies of policy absolutely opposed to those which had led to the successful intervention in Syria, and which had been again and again sanctioned by the language as well as by the action of preceding Governments. But when I brought the matter before the House of Lords on the 8th of March, 1867, I found no support in Parliament, and but little sympathy in the Press. The doctrine, indeed, had not yet been conceived, or at least it had not found expression, that the sufferings of the people of Turkey, however much in themselves to be deplored, were, after all, but a matter of secondary importance compared with certain "British interests," which required, at any cost of this kind, the maintenance of the Turkish power. But, although this doctrine, as foolish as it is iniquitous, had not yet come to be distinctly entertained, nevertheless the public conscience was fast asleep upon the whole subject of our duties and obligations in the East of Europe, as

arising out of our action in the experimental maintenance of Turkey.

On the other hand the Cretan Insurrection, and the facts which transpired as to the savage manner in which the contest was waged by the Turkish Government, were the beginnings of that awakening in the public mind of this country, which has since controlled the conduct of its Government in a far more important crisis. Small as the amount of attention is which can be given by the people of England to the affairs of Turkey, and imperfect as their knowledge must be of all details, enough was transpiring from time to time to produce a vague, but a settled and general impression that the Sultans were not fulfilling the "solemn promises" they had made to Europe; that the vices of the Turkish Government were ineradicable; and that whenever another crisis might arise affecting the "independence" of the Ottoman Empire, it would be wholly impossible to afford to it again the support we had afforded in the Crimean war.

This state of public feeling very soon became reflected in the language of the Government; and when in 1870 the overwhelming defeat of France made it evident that the whole question of the balance of power in Europe must be regarded from a different point of view, and that it would be impossible, even if we desired it, to reanimate the alliances of 1854, the British Cabinet lost no time in warning

Turkey that nothing but the reform of her own administration could again save her from her enemies. The form in which warnings of this kind are given by the Foreign Office depends always a good deal upon the particular circumstances which call them forth, and upon the habits of language and of thought which belong to the Minister of the time. No very special instance of Turkish corruption was before us in 1870, and the Minister who presided over foreign affairs was one who, in explaining even the firmest resolutions, is courteous and conciliatory in the expression of them. On the 6th October, 1870, Lord Granville addressed to Sir H. Elliot the following most significant despatch:—*

"Foreign Office, October 6, 1870.

"Referring to my conversation with the Turkish Ambassador, reported in my despatch of this day, I wish to submit some considerations of an important character to your Excellency.

"Although I am willing to place confidence in the explanations which have been given to Sir A. Buchanan as to any design being entertained by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg of a hostile character to Turkey, and although I believe that Russia is not now prepared for war, it is impossible to rely permanently on this state of things.

"No one can doubt that it is a universal wish in Russia to modify, or even abrogate, the conditions of

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 186, p. 130.

the Treaty of 1856, even if she has no ulterior object of ambition.

"The last fourteen years have been prosperous to Russia. The material resources of the country have been developed by the emancipation of the serfs, by the extension of commerce and manufactures, by a great development of the railway and telegraphic system, and by an increase of political liberty. Russia believes she is as strong as she ever was.

"The continuance of the war, or even the conclusion of peace, would favour diplomatic action on her part, and even more decided measures.

"Her Majesty's Government desire carefully to consider what position it would behove this country to take in such a contingency.

"England made great sacrifices in blood and money during the Crimean war for an object which was deemed to be of great importance both to itself and the rest of Europe.

"The nation would be loth to see all the results sacrificed which had been thus obtained. But would it be wise, would it be compatible with ordinary prudence, for Great Britain, single-handed, to throw itself into such another struggle?

"How far could Turkey defend itself even with such assistance as England could afford?

"Is it fair to Turkey to encourage her in the belief that she may rely with confidence on the support of Europe, and with absolute certainty on that of Great Britain? I have already told the Turkish Ambassador that I could not give assurances as to future contingencies.

"Would it not be more friendly to say more, and to point out that there are contingencies in which Turkey must feel sure that she could not rely upon our aid, and to impress upon her that her real safety will depend upon the spirit and feelings of the populations over which she rules?

"Already we are informed that in some of her dependencies the extension of the advantages which local Government gives have turned the feelings of the people against the Russians, and inclined them to attach more importance to their connexion with Turkey.

"It is certain that the feelings of the Christian subjects of the Porte will be in favour of the Porte or of Russia, exactly in proportion to the amount of liberty, prosperity, and order which they enjoy under the one, or are likely to obtain under the other.

"I should be glad to hear your views on the matters to which I have alluded: the power of the Turks to defend themselves against such Powers as Russia, or possibly Austria; in what way we, single-handed, could effectually assist them; and in what mode we could best warn them of the necessity for caution on their part; and how far it would be possible to induce them to take the large measures of conciliation which would effectually attach the Christian population to their Government."

It was of no avail. During the few years which elapsed between this warning and the insurrection which has revived the whole Eastern Question, Lord

Granville and Lord Derby have in turn been called upon to repeat the old remonstrances against the gross abuses of Turkish government in almost every province of the empire. In 1871* as regarded Bosnia, in 1872 as regarded Crete,† in 1873 as regarded Bosnia again.‡ As regarded Syria in the same year§ Lord Granville had to warn and to rebuke. Lord Derby's representations in 1874 and 1875 are indeed shorter and more perfunctory. But some of them are, at least as regards the localities referred to, highly significant. Considering the discussions which have arisen in respect to the real origin of the revolts which began in Bosnia and in Bulgaria, it is surely remarkable to find that in November and in December, 1875, we have the following despatches from Lord Derby to Sir H. Elliot‖ :—

"Foreign Office, November 25, 1875.

"I approve your Excellency having communicated a copy of Mr. Brophy's despatch to the Porte respecting the outrages committed on the Bulgarians by Circassians under the guidance of Turkish zaptiehs, and it would be well that you should urge that such atrocities deserve the severest punishment of all concerned.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."

* Turkey, XVII., 1877. No. 187, p. 131.
† Ibid., No. 190, p. 131.
‡ Ibid., No. 193, p. 132.
§ Ibid., No. 196, p. 134.
‖ Ibid., No. 225, p. 141.

Here we have the old evidence, that the miseries suffered by the subject populations of Turkey are due to the direct agency of Turkish officials, and not merely to banditti whom those officials are unable to suppress. And so, again, as regards Bosnia, we see that the Turkish Government was encouraging the massacre of refugees from its own tyranny by extending impunity to the murderers:*—

"Foreign Office, December 8, 1875.

"Her Majesty's Government approve your Excellency's proceedings, as reported in your despatch of 23rd ultimo, in which you state that you had reminded the Porte that no intelligence had been received of any one having been punished for the massacre at Poporopolis of the Christian refugees who were returning to their homes, and that the Grand Vizier had, in consequence, telegraphed to the Governor-General of Bosnia to inquire what had been done to secure the punishment of those concerned in that outrage.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."

I close this short review of the course taken by various Governments in this country from 1856 to 1875, by republishing a short despatch addressed by Lord Clarendon to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe at the commencement of this period, because it expresses

* Ibid., No. 226, p. 141.

by anticipation better than any other the conclusion which, at the end of the twenty years, has been confirmed by all observation and all experience :—

"Foreign Office, June 28, 1857.

"I transmit, for your Excellency's information, copies of a despatch from Mr. Consul Churchill, and of my reply respecting the bad treatment of the Christians in Bosnia.

"Her Majesty's Government know by experience the utter inutility of appealing on such matters to the Porte, but the Turkish Government should be made aware that if this systematic misgovernment, and persecution of Christians, and violations of engagements continue, it will be impossible to arrest the progress of the opinion which is now manifesting itself that Mohammedan rule is incompatible with civilisation and humanity, and can no longer be endured.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "CLARENDON."

## CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE OUTBREAK OF THE INSURRECTION IN HERZEGOVINA IN JULY, 1875, TO THE REJECTION OF THE BERLIN MEMORANDUM BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN MAY, 1876.

THE papers quoted in a former chapter* prove that in 1875 the British Government was in possession of conclusive evidence from all the provinces of the Turkish Empire, not only that the "solemn promises" given in 1856 had not been and were not being fulfilled, but also that matters in this respect, instead of getting better, were getting distinctly worse. Moreover, from the same evidence it was clear that the particular vices of the Turkish administration, were precisely those which cut deepest into the condition of the people, and especially into the condition of the Christian subjects of the Porte. The practical exclusion of these from redress in the Courts of Law, under a system in which the agents and officers of Government were themselves the principal oppressors, was in itself an evil involving the most intolerable consequences. It was a system under which neither the lives, nor the property, nor the honour of families were secure for a moment when assailed by a Moslem.

* Chap. II.

And yet the Eastern Question was not one which any Cabinet in Europe could volunteer to raise. Not even such official reports as those which we have seen could overcome the inertia which attached to the position of affairs. The very badness of these reports was a deterring, and a powerful deterring cause. They indicated the hopelessness of reform except under conditions of fundamental change. But no such change could be effected without the general consent of Europe, nor, probably, without the active co-operation of Powers which were notoriously more or less jealous of each other's motives. Under these conditions there was but one agency which could raise the Eastern Question as a question on which "something must be done." The subject population of Turkey must raise it, or nobody else would do it for them. The final test that a Government has become intolerable is that the people under it will not endure it. Sovereigns who do not afford to their subjects the common rights of humanity have no claim to their allegiance: or if this be disputed by the advocates of the doctrine of passive obedience, at least it will be admitted that such Governments must expect, if they do not justify, insurrections. The Powers which for their own purposes of policy maintained the Turkish Empire, might possibly be excused for waiting until this last proof were given of the failure of the experiment which they had agreed to try in 1856. Nothing short of this proof could arrest the attention

of the world, and produce that amount of conviction and of agreement which was essential to effective action. But there is one course which in such a case nothing could excuse, and that is the course of continuing to defend the Turkish Government when its people were excited to revolt by intolerable wrongs—the course of protecting it against the rising indignation of other Powers, and of thwarting their efforts at combination with a view to secure reform.

Yet this and no other was the course taken by the British Government from the time when the insurrection began in 1875, till the Bulgarian massacres of May, 1876, became known in England. The proof of this assertion is to be found in the papers presented to Parliament, and will form the subject of the present chapter.

It is to be observed, in the first place, that the revolt began in those two provinces of European Turkey respecting which we had the most recent, the most continuous, and at the same time the most definite and damning evidence of corruption and misgovernment. Consul Holmes was the official from whom that evidence principally came, and from him also came the first accounts of the revolt. The disturbances began in the Herzegovina and in Bosnia, and were reported to our Government by Consul Holmes in successive despatches, during the month of July, 1875. The tone of them is thoroughly Turkish. His information as to facts seems to have been

derived principally, if not entirely, from the highest Turkish official, the Governor-General of the Province. People of the district of Nevessin had migrated to Montenegro. They had then asked leave to return: the Porte had allowed them to do so. Soon after, they had appeared in revolt, and actually declared they were oppressed. They were then trying to force their neighbours to join them by intimidation. The Turkish officer at Mostar had invited them to meet at that place to state their grievances, assuring them they should be redressed; but they had refused to do so. Consul Holmes was told by the Governor-General that they cut to pieces a man quite unconnected with them who had gone to Mostar to seek redress for some grievance, and threatened with the same fate any within their reach who should do so in future.* This was on the 2nd July. Similar accounts, all on the same high authority of the Turkish Governor-General, followed on the 9th. Turks were being murdered everywhere and decapitated. The Mussulman population were impatient to attack the insurgents, and avenge the savage murders of their co-religionists.

On the 16th of July Sir Henry Elliot very properly suggested that these sources of information were hardly satisfactory, and that Consul Holmes should be authorised to go himself to Mostar, or to

* Turkey, II., 1876. No. 1, p. 1.

send some one in whom he had confidence.* On the 19th this suggestion was approved of by Lord Derby, and Consul Holmes was authorised to proceed to Mostar, and to collect accurate information as to the state of the country. On the 24th Consul Holmes was still reporting, on the authority of Turkish officials, how kindly and gently they were dealing with the insurgents, and how these people were so unreasonable as to be distrustful of Turkish promises, and therefore to demand that their grievances should be redressed before, and not after, they had laid down their arms.

We now come to the first action of the British Government. That action was in cordial response to an appeal from the Turkish Government for help against the insurgents. On the 10th August, Safvet Pacha, Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, telegraphed to Musurus Pacha, the Turkish Ambassador in London, that the insurrection was daily assuming more serious proportions, that assistance in men and money was furnished to it by neighbouring populations, that the repressive measures of the Austro-Hungarian Government were insufficient, that a Servian corps d'armée on the frontier, and other circumstances, gave good cause to believe that the revolt was only the beginning of a design long since settled. In these circumstances it was represented "that a

* Ibid., No. 3, p. 2.

friendly step on the part of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, having for its object to induce the Cabinet of Vienna to take serious and efficacious measures upon its frontier, would facilitate our task in quelling the insurrection."*

Without delay on the 12th August, before any trustworthy information had been received as to the justice or injustice of the cause of the insurgents, the British Government acted on this appeal from the Government of Turkey, and directed our Minister at Vienna to represent to the Austrian Cabinet "that Her Majesty's Government would be glad to learn that the Government of Austro-Hungary had taken steps to secure the peace of the frontier, and to prevent the disturbances in Herzegovina from receiving support or encouragement from Austrian territory."† On the same day similar instructions were sent to the British agent at Belgrade, through Sir H. Elliot, and that Ambassador was desired, if he had opportunity, to dissuade the Prince of Montenegro from helping those who had struck for freedom.

Not less significant was the action of the British Government in the advice tendered to Turkey herself. The appeal which she had thus made to England suggested that similar appeals might be made to other European Governments. This was a danger to be guarded against. It might imply some reliance

* Ibid., No. 11, p. 5.

† Ibid., No. 12, pp. 5, 6.

on external aid—some dependence of Turkey on Europe in respect to its internal affairs. Turkey must, if possible, be dissuaded from any such course as might bring on European intervention. Therefore the despatch of August 12, to Sir H. Elliot, concluded thus: "At the same time Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that the Turkish Government should rely on their own resources to suppress the insurrection, and should deal with it as a local outbreak of disorder rather than give international importance to it by appealing to other Powers."*

In this despatch we have the keynote, or, what Lord Beaconsfield has since called, the "Diapason" of the policy of the British Government during the whole of the twelvemonth to be reviewed in this chapter. It consisted, first, in urgent exhortations to the Government of Turkey to put down the insurrection—without the smallest regard to the question whether the demands of the insurgents were just or not, or whether the grievances they complained of were intolerable or not. It consisted, secondly, in persistent endeavours to prevent, to thwart, and finally to reduce to the most insignificant proportions, every endeavour to bring the concert of Europe to bear upon administrative reforms in Turkey.

The other Governments of Europe, however, were not so blind either to the dangers of the situation, or

* Ibid., No. 13, p. 6.

to the only course by which these dangers could possibly be met.

On the 18th August,* the three Ambassadors at Constantinople of Russia, Germany, and Austria, proposed to the Porte that delegates representing the three Embassies should proceed to the scene of insurrection, and should formally declare to the insurgents that they must expect no encouragement or support from them, but that they should advise them to make known by a deputation the nature of their complaints to a special officer, a "High Commissioner," to be appointed for that purpose by the Porte. The three delegates were to do no more. But the proposal being made in the first instance to the Porte, with a view to obtaining its approval and assent, assumed, as a matter of course, that the Turkish Government would agree to appoint such an officer, and would authorise him to hold out such promises to the insurgents as might induce them to take the course recommended to them by the three Great Powers.

The Government of Turkey being at this time very weak, and evidently much alarmed, at once saw an advantage in this proposal. The consent of the insurgents to trust once more to mere promises of reform was, they well knew, more than doubtful. And yet, in refusing to do so, they would place themselves in antagonism to the wishes and advice of the

* Ibid., No. 17; Inclos. p. 9.

Great Powers. Clearly this was a consummation much to be desired. Accordingly, on the 20th August, the Grand Vizier called on Sir H. Elliot, having previously seen both the Russian and Austrian Ambassadors, and begged the British Ambassador "not to hold back from instructing Mr. Holmes in the same sense as that in which his colleagues proposed to instruct their respective Consuls."* The Grand Vizier added that "he looked upon this as a matter of the utmost importance to the Porte, and his anxiety that a British Consular agent should join those of the other Powers was increased by his knowledge of Mr. Holmes, in whom he knew the Porte could place perfect confidence."

On the 24th of August the Turkish version of this proposal was communicated to the British Government by Musurus Pacha, and it is remarkable that in this version the Consular agents of the Powers were to give an assurance on behalf of the Porte to the insurgents, that the Extraordinary Commissioner sent to hear the complaints of the population "would not fail to receive with kindness any legitimate demands which may be made to him, and will redress well-founded complaints."† The object of the Turkish Government, in its eager acceptance of this proposal, was not obscurely indicated in the following passage: "Thus freeing itself by this last act of condescen-

* Ibid., No. 17, p. 9. † Ibid., No. 15, p. 7.

sion of its responsibility as regards future eventualities, the Imperial Government reserves to itself the right, in case the action of the Consuls does not attain the desired result, of employing force and of putting an end to this unhappy affair."

It is quite obvious that there were many serious objections to this proposal. It assumed, on the part of the European Powers, the responsibility of advising the insurgents to lay down their arms, without any adequate knowledge of the causes which had driven them to revolt; and it assumed the still greater responsibility of advising them to trust to promises of reform, which the Ambassadors at the Porte had the best means of knowing were as certain to prove illusory as all other similar promises had ever been. The very reason in favour of the proposal which was urged by Turkey, placed these objections in the clearest light. The advantage which the Turks foresaw it would give them over the insurgents was an unjust advantage, and it tended to make the European Powers accomplices in this injustice.

If the British Cabinet had pointed out these objections, and had refused its assent to the proposal unless so altered as to avoid them, it would have acted with honour, and therefore with sound policy. On the contrary, however, it assented to the proposal, declaring at the same time that it did so "with reluctance." But, strange to say, its assent was given

on the ground which of all others made the proposal most open to objection; whilst, on the other hand, its reluctance was explained to rest upon considerations which were the only redeeming feature in the case. The redeeming feature was simply this—that it was a first step towards a common agreement among the Powers of Europe with a view to some effective reform in Turkey, and the very fact that it involved a serious responsibility towards the insurgents, made it probable that this responsibility would be acknowledged, and would lead to farther action.

It was this one salutary and hopeful aspect of the proposal which most excited the fears of the British Cabinet, and the one only inducement which led them to agree was, that the Turkish Government, which they knew to be thoroughly vicious and corrupt, begged them to assent because it expected to derive advantage from their doing so.

These motives were fully explained by the Foreign Secretary in a despatch to Sir H. Elliot, dated the 24th August, and the explanation was specially directed to the Porte It sets forth that the proposal had been made by the three Northern Powers; that the French Ambassador had been directed to associate himself with the action of his colleagues; that it had been favourably received by the Porte, and that the Grand Vizier had begged the British Ambassador not to stand aloof. This last fact was decisive. "Her Majesty's Government consent to this step with re-

luctance. Since, however, the Porte has begged your Excellency not to stand aloof, Her Majesty's Government feel that they have no alternative."* The reluctance of the Cabinet is thus explained: "Her Majesty's Government doubt the expediency of the intervention of Foreign Consuls. Such an intervention is scarcely compatible with the independent authority of the Porte over its own territory, offers an inducement to insurrection as a means of appealing to foreign sympathy against Turkish rule, and may not improbably open the way to farther diplomatic interference in the internal affairs of the Empire."

It is to be observed that in this and in the previous despatches quoted, there is not one word of warning or of rebuke to Turkey on account of its vicious and corrupt administration; not one word expressive of even a suspended judgment on the possible justification of the insurgents. The Turkish Government is taught to believe that the one object of the British Cabinet is to support the authority of the Porte, however cruelly exerted, and to avert from it the interference of those Powers of Europe by whose protection alone Turkey had been enabled to assume a place among the civilised nations of the world. This despatch of the 24th August did not conclude without incul-

* Ibid., No. 16, p. 8.

cating this lesson, and impressing this belief, still farther on the British Ambassador, and on the Grand Vizier: "Her Majesty's Government desires at the same time that the Turkish Government should understand, that the assent of Her Majesty's Government is given at their own instance, and that Her Majesty's Government would have thought it better that the Porte should have dealt with the insurgents without foreign intervention of any kind." The Foreign Secretary concluded his despatch by asking who the Consuls were who were to be selected for the Mission, and by desiring that the instructions given to them should be reported. He supposed they would be identic.

In this last supposition, however, Lord Derby was mistaken. The nervous fear of European interference had been so well inculcated on our Ambassador at the Porte, that he considered "all appearance of identic action seemed to be undesirable."* The Powers were indeed to unite in the Mission, but it was carefully arranged that they should not appear to say exactly the same thing. Only this was to be observed, that "any communication with the insurgents should be strictly confined to inducing them to return to their allegiance."

Consul Holmes was selected by Sir H. Elliot as the British Agent in this mission, and on the 24th

* Ibid., No. 19, p. 10.

August the instructions under which he was to act were sent to him.*

In these instructions it was carefully explained that, "although the views and instructions of the different Governments were identic, he was at the same time to take the greatest pains to avoid everything that, either in the eyes of the Turkish authorities or in those of the insurgents, might have the appearance of a united action, and he was therefore to abstain from collective steps, but was rather to act individually." He was to represent himself as the agent of a friendly Government, charged with a mission of conciliation. He was to make the insurgents understand that they must not calculate on support of any Power. He was to persuade them to enter into negotiations with the Imperial Commissioner of the Porte, and to make known their grievances to him. He was to state that the British Government would use its influence with the Porte "in recommending that the legitimate grievances which may be established should be remedied or removed;" but he was to be careful to avoid pledging Her Majesty's Government in regard to any measures to be taken, which must be the result of a direct understanding between the parties.

It is needless to say that this was advice to the insurgents to make an unconditional submission to the

* Ibid., No. 20, pp. 10, 11.

Turkish authorities, and to rely absolutely on whatever promises or assurances these authorities might make. No authority was given to the Consuls to hold out any hope to the insurgents that the Protecting Powers of Turkey would move a finger to protect its people. On the contrary, the holding out of any such hope was expressly forbidden. But more than this, the Consuls were expressly forbidden even to inquire into the nature or the justice of the complaints under which the insurgents had taken up arms. This extraordinary prohibition was conveyed in the following terms: "It may be impossible for you to prevent the Christians from making known to you the nature and extent of their grievances, but without refusing to listen to what may be necessary to enable you to report to Her Majesty's Embassy, in order that the insurgents may not delude themselves into supposing that the Powers guarantee the realisation of the wishes which they may submit to the Imperial Commissioner, you will avoid provoking any discussion of their grievances." The Consul was farther instructed, that as the "first object was to prevent bloodshed," he was to urge the insurgents to abstain from hostile acts during the negotiations, to disperse, and to return to their villages; and when this had been done, the Consul was to return to his head-quarters, without waiting to know the result.

Thus the Consuls were not only to advise unconditional surrender beforehand on the faith of the

perfect sincerity of the Turkish officials; but they were to leave this advice as their final word, whatever might be the conditions laid down by the Commissioner of the Porte.

These official instructions were accompanied by an explanatory letter* from the British Ambassador to Consul Holmes, in which the animus of our "reluctant assent" to the whole proceeding is still more openly avowed. Consul Holmes is told that the object is "to make the insurgents understand the hopelessness of engaging in a contest with the Imperial troops." In the next sentence Sir H. Elliot answers not only for his own objects, but for the mind of the Porte. The Mission had been consented to by the Porte, not from any doubt of its ability to quell the movement, but from a reluctance to accept energetic measures of repression, &c. There is every reason to believe that this was not true, and it is certainly inconsistent with the account of the military situation which Consul Holmes had given only one month before. On the 24th July he had reported that "the Governor-General had little more than three battalions available for aggressive operations; of the seven or eight battalions stationed in the Herzegovina, he could not, he declared, displace a man, and that the different garrisons ought to be strengthened rather than weakened."† It thus appears that

* Ibid., Inclos. 2, in No. 20, pp. 11, 12. † Ibid., No. 9, p. 4.

the British Ambassador was, in this matter, presuming on the ignorance or credulity of the insurgents. The instructions go on to say:—"An impression has prevailed among the Christians that they enjoy foreign sympathy in the present movement, and that if sustained it will receive material support. The task which you and your colleagues have before you is to put an end to this delusion, and to convince the insurgents that the Powers are unanimous in withholding all countenance from them."

It is remarkable that before these instructions received the formal assent of the British Cabinet it had been furnished with the clearest evidence that the insurgents had the most flagrant wrongs to complain of. This evidence came from the Porte itself. In the first days of September a Firman* was issued by the Sultan addressed to Governors-General of all the provinces, in which confession was made—guarded in its terms indeed—of the misgovernment and oppression of the people. It refers to a separate summary sent along with it "of the acts which have been committed to the knowledge of all the world, contrary to the laws of my empire." A letter from the Sultan to the Grand Vizier spoke of the "causes which produce trouble among the peaceable populations" as "in a great measure due to the unseemly conduct of some incapable functionaries,

* Ibid., No. 24, pp. 15, 16.

and particularly to the exactions to which the avaricious farmers of the taxes lend themselves, in the hope of a large profit." In the Firman allusion is made, though indirectly, to the master-evil of the corruption of justice, in an exhortation that lawsuits be judged with impartiality. These are indeed but faint and inadequate representations of the state of things which Consul Holmes had depicted in many despatches. But when it is considered that they came from the Sultan in proclamations of the highest authority, they indicate how much remained unsaid.

Consul Holmes proceeded to execute his mission with his colleagues on the 12th September, and he returned to Mostar on the 22nd, having failed to persuade the insurgents to adopt the pusillanimous course which he had been instructed to recommend. His Austrian, German, and Italian colleagues were equally unsuccessful. It is to the honour, however, of Consul Holmes that he at once reported to his Government the favourable impression which personal inquiry had given him as regarded the demands and desires of the insurgents. Nothing can be more different than his account now founded on actual knowledge, from the stories he had before repeated, on the authority of Turkish Governors. In his despatch of September 24, 1875,* he explains that the leaders of the insurrection "de-

* Ibid., No. 28, p. 23.

manded an armistice and an European intervention, to guarantee the reforms which may be adopted. I would here remark that, contrary to what is asserted by so many newspapers, the people of the Herzegovina neither demand, nor have ever desired an impossible autonomy, as Servian agitators would have desired them to do. They only ask to remain subjects of the Sultan, with reformed laws, and a proper and just administration of them. How to secure this is the difficulty."

It is a valuable comment on the folly of the advice given to the insurgents by the British Cabinet, that during the very time when the Consular Mission was conducting its communications, the Turkish officials committed an act of signal treachery. The Consuls, as we have seen, had been directed to advise the insurgents to suspend all acts of hostility during the negotiations; and the invitation of the Consuls to meet them at certain places was of course a pledge that similar abstention would be observed by the agents and officers of the Porte. Yet this honourable understanding was grossly violated. "Whilst the Consuls were among the insurgents," says Sir H. Elliot,* "the Wali proceeded to Stolatz, and ordered the troops to march against those assembled to meet the Consuls. On the 19th, having left the insurgents, he met the troops, and was apprised of their des-

* Ibid., No. 31, p. 26.

tination. The attack was made on the 20th. On the side of the insurgents there were six killed and many wounded. If this affair had happened a day sooner the consequence to the Consuls might have been fatal. The insurgents," Mr. Holmes adds, "will probably hesitate to meet them again; they will not submit, as they distrust the Turks, and demand a European intervention."

Sir Henry Elliot goes so far as to characterise this affair as "not satisfactory." But on the part of the British Cabinet it does not appear that any notice was taken of it, or that it was regarded as throwing any light whatever on the justice and reasonableness of the advice which had been given to the insurgents. In Consul Holmes's report of the affair he says: "I felt very indignant, as did my colleagues, at this attempt, as it seemed, to profit by the fact of our having assembled together a certain number of insurgents to attack them when off their guard." But his remonstrances were met by the usual prevarication or falsehood on the part of the Governor-General.*

This transaction makes it all the more painful to observe that in his communication with the insurgents Consul Holmes went great lengths (though probably not farther than warranted by his instructions) in assuring them of the sincerity of the Turkish Govern-

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos., p. 38.

ment. "We explained to them that his Excellency was specially sent by the Sultan, who was most anxious that justice should be done to them." Again he says, "they might be sure the Turkish Government was sincere in its promises." Now, it is quite certain that the British Government had not the smallest right or the least ground for giving such assurances. Sir H. Elliot's and Consul Holmes's own reports prove that they could not be given with any regard to truth.

In contrast with this language of diplomatic hollowness, it is refreshing to turn to the manly attitude of the insurgents. "They repeatedly declared," says Consul Holmes, "that they were, and wished to remain, faithful subjects of the Sultan (taking off their caps at the mention of his name), but that his Majesty was deceived by his Pashas, and could not be aware of their condition. In short, the result was, that unless Europe would guarantee their safety from their Agas and the authorities, and that the reforms promised should be really carried out, they dared not, and would not, lay down their arms."

The Consuls of Austria, Germany, and Italy, who had gone to a different part of the disturbed district, returned with the same impression as to the firmness of the insurgents, and as to the justice and moderation of their demands. Consul Holmes himself says in the same report, as regards Bosnia, that

"almost to a man the population would refuse to be annexed to Servia or Austria; and they have never dreamed of independence. They also wish to be Turkish subjects, but to be governed with justice and peace on an equality in law with the Mussulman compatriots."

The only qualification to this important evidence which Consul Holmes gives in his report is a passage in which he declares his opinion that the oppression in the Herzegovina in general is greatly exaggerated by the Christians, "and that the discontent which undoubtedly exists against most of the Turkish landowners, and against the Zaptiehs and tax-farmers, has been the excuse rather than the cause of the revolt, which was assuredly arranged by Servian agitators and accomplished by force." This is in the stereotyped tone of British Consuls when Turkey is assailed by any serious danger, or when its iniquities are complained of by anybody except themselves. It is language very easily held by men and nations who are themselves comfortable, and do not wish to be troubled with the miseries of others. The tendency and the disposition to hold it is all the stronger when those who do so have an uneasy consciousness that they are themselves, in part at least, responsible for the evils complained of. The best explanation of it is perhaps that which Consul Holmes himself supplied when, in the last passage of this report, he says: "Your Excellency will observe that I have

passed over the grievances of which the insurgents complain in a few general terms."

The contrast between the "few general terms" in which the British Consul speaks of that which constituted the essence of the whole question, and the very definite terms in which the insurgents spoke of it, is indeed remarkable. On the 1st October Consul Holmes had to forward* to the Foreign Office a Memorandum on the "grievances which were the principal cause of the insurrection of the Christian inhabitants of the Herzegovina. It was addressed to the representatives of the European Powers in the Herzegovina.* Consul Holmes forwarded it with a warning that "it might probably contain a good deal of exaggeration," and promised that as soon as he could read it he would send his observations on its contents. No such observations are to be found in the official papers, and we may therefore safely conclude that Consul Holmes found it a difficult paper to deal with. It is indeed a singularly clear, powerful, and definite arraignment of the vices of Turkish administration. It has been abundantly confirmed by indisputable evidence, and has finally been acknowledged by Europe. It concluded with these words, which bear upon their face the impress of truth, justice, and moderation: "Gentlemen,—It is impossible for the Turkish Government

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* Ibid., No. 33, p. 29.

to apply a remedy now; long experience demonstrates this, the weakness and continual decline of the Government show it; and the constant and firm resistance of the Mahometans of the province shows it. The hope of a remedy from that quarter would be as delusive as it always has been; our Turks would know well how to deceive the Sultan and the Powers by many arts and in many ways: they would know how to procure official documents in an unknown language, with signatures and seals which would endanger the lives and the property of the Christians; they would even find not a few Christians in the city who would act with them against their co-religionists, just because they not unfrequently go shares with the Turks in their unlawful gains, and because they are not so heavily burdened with taxes as the poor Christians in the villages. We hope that this consultation of the Christian Powers on our misfortune will not be like that of the physicians on a desperate case, and come to nothing.

"In order to get rid of this misery, to put an end to such sufferings, to free Christians from the rule of the Turks and from continual oppression, to remove the fuel of the raging insurrection, and to insure a durable peace, we find no other means than one of the following resolutions:—

"(1.) The Christians are resolved to die rather than suffer such slavery, therefore they should be left to seek their liberation by arms, and if they are not

assisted they have at least a right to have no obstacles put in the way of their enterprise, and to expect that no aid should be given to the oppressor.

"(2.) Or we are forced to beg some Christian Power to grant us a corner of land so that we may all emigrate to it, and abandon this unhappy country so cursed with misfortunes.

"(3.) Or the Powers should prevail on the Sultan to let an autonomous State be formed of Bosnia and Herzegovina, tributary to the Sultan, with some Christian Prince from elsewhere, but never from here.

"(4.) Or finally (the minimum), let the Powers agree at once to put a strong body of troops from some neighbouring State into the principal cities of the province, and let the representatives of the Powers enter the principal medjlis as judges until things are put in order, and the lives, honour, and property of the Christians are rendered secure, with equality of civil and religious rights."—Herzegovina, September 17, 1875.

It would be as difficult to dispute the absolute justice of the demand here made upon the European Powers, as to deny the truth of the allegations respecting Turkish misgovernment upon which these demands were founded. The insurgents asked no more than this: that if the European Powers could not or would not insist on reforms being effected in a Government which for their own policy they were sustaining, at least they would not throw obstacles in the way of

the population rising to secure for themselves by arms the blessings which were enjoyed by every population round them and under every European Government but their own.

Nevertheless it does not appear that this appeal produced the slightest effect upon the diplomatic action or the policy of the British Cabinet. It continued, as we shall see, to be a policy of active diplomatic intervention against the unfortunate insurgents, of continual appeals to Turkey to put them down, of appeals as urgent to neighbouring Governments not to give them, or to allow to be given to them, any external sympathy or aid; and finally of anxious efforts to prevent the European Powers from coming to any common understanding as to the best mode of compelling Turkey to fulfil the solemn promises given in the Treaties of 1856.

The alarm, and at the same time the weakness, of the Turkish Government was now exhibited in the issue of a profusion of Firmans, proclamations, and letters of instruction to governors—all lavish in promises, and hardly less abounding in confessions. Some of these betray the existence of grievances and abuses of which very little notice had then, or has since, been taken, but which indicate the number and variety of ways in which the agents of such a Government as that of Turkey can carry violence and oppression into every detail of life. Thus, in an Imperial Firman issued on the 13th December, we

find the following passage :—"The testamentary dispositions of our non-Mussulman subjects in the provinces shall be respected, and no interference will be permitted with the proceedings of the guardians of the property of minors."* Such a promised "reform" as this is indeed a revelation.

Accordingly, the inferences to be derived from the promises and assurances of reform contained in all these official instruments of the Porte did not escape the attention of Europe; and on the 29th December Musurus Pasha called on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, for the purpose of denying these inferences, or explaining them away. The explanation of the Turkish Ambassador was as follows :†—"It had been stated that the fact of the Sultan issuing a Firman for reforms was a proof that the fact of the reforms promised by the Hatti-Humazoun had not been carried into effect; and if this were so, how could greater confidence be placed in the present than in past promises of reform? Now this was far from being the truth. . . . . The edifice of which the foundation was laid by the Firman of Gulhane in 1839, and the body completed by the Hatti-Humazoun of 1856, was now crowned and made perfect by the recent Firman." It will be seen that this is an explanation more eloquent than satisfactory.

In the meantime events had taken a course which

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* Ibid., No. 50, Inclos. 2, p. 65. † Ibid., No. 52, p. 66.

compelled the European Power which suffered most directly from the misgovernment of Turkey to consult with its allies on the necessity of taking some effective measures to abate the evil. The Cabinet of Austro-Hungary was probably not less purely selfish in its policy than the Cabinet of England; but most fortunately its self-interest was more directly and visibly coincident with its duty. It did not wish to re-open the Eastern Question; but it could not fail to see that it must be re-opened in the most dangerous form, unless by some common consent Turkey were compelled to reform its administration. The population of the adjoining Austrian provinces could not be prevented from entertaining an active sympathy with their kinsmen and co-religionists across the border; and when these were compelled by Turkish treachery to take refuge in Austrian territory the Government or the people, or both, were necessarily burdened with their support. Agitation was extending, and could not be repressed. It was being continually reinforced by fresh proofs of the faithlessness of the Turkish Government, and of the violence of the Moslem population. Thus early in the insurrection the Christian inhabitants of a village called Popo-ropolie had taken refuge in Dalmatia. They had subsequently been persuaded to return, and the Turks had affected to place two battalions to protect them. But some of the Irregulars, who always accompany Turkish troops, had set upon them, and had

killed several; the result of which was that the whole population had again fled to Austrian protection.* Our Minister had remonstrated, and had urged the punishment of the offenders, and he had received the usual promises; but as usual also these promises were vain. Towards the end of November, more than a month after the murders had been perpetrated, Sir H. Elliot "had not heard of any one having been punished."†

It was under the continued operation of causes such as these that the Austrian Government proceeded farther to consult with the Powers of Europe as to the measures to be taken in the interests of the people of Turkey, and in the interests of peace. The timid and suspicious policy of the British Cabinet led it to regard every step in this direction, not as a benefit, but as an evil. On the 20th of November the Foreign Secretary wrote to our Ambassador at Vienna that "the gravity of the political situation had undoubtedly been aggravated by rumours that the Austrian Government were concerting some scheme in regard to the Herzegovina without consultation with the Powers parties to the Treaty of 1856;" and expressed satisfaction with an assurance from Baron Hofman that the Austrian Government had nothing to conceal from England, as well as an invitation from that Minister to ask frankly for explanations of any reports that might

* Ibid., No 42, pp. 50, 51. † Ibid., No. 45, p. 57.

have reached her.* There does not seem to have been the smallest truth in these reports so far as they ascribed to Austria an intention not to consult all the Powers parties to the Treaty of 1856. But it was perfectly true, and had already been fully explained, that three of those Powers were taking the initiative—as they had the best right to do—to bring about an agreement among the whole. This, however, was precisely what the British Cabinet seemed to dread the most. It is important to observe that in this matter Austria continued to act in perfect harmony with her assurances. On the 11th December† the Austrian Ambassador communicated to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what his Government were doing. At Constantinople it was pressing the Porte to adopt reforms, "the aim of the Austro-Hungarian Government being to obtain the extinguishing of the insurrection before the spring." Count Beust then described the policy of Turkey in language which applies exactly, as we have seen, to the policy of the British Cabinet. "The Turkish Ministers," he said, "had hitherto directed their energies exclusively to the task of preventing anything which could be construed into an interference of any kind with the internal affairs of Turkey. This standpoint, however respectable it may be, has the disadvantage the Austro-Hungarian Government con-

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*. Ibid., No. 43, p. 51. † Ibid., No. 45, p. 57.

sidered of prolonging a regrettable state of things, and therefore of aggravating the danger. Negotiations respecting the affairs of the East are now being carried on between Vienna and St. Petersburg, the result of which will be communicated, as soon as an agreement had been arrived at, to Her Majesty's Government, not in the light of an accomplished fact, but for their consideration and for them to state their own opinions on the propositions agreed upon."

The result of these communications between Austria, Germany, and Russia was the famous "Andrassy Note," which was dated at Buda Pest on the 30th December, 1875, and communicated without delay to all the Powers signatory to the Treaties of 1856.

There can be no doubt that this memorable document rests upon and asserts the principle that the Powers of Europe which had guaranteed the Turkish Empire in 1856, had a right, in their own interests and in the interests of the general peace, to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey, and to require from her Government definite pledges and definite securities that its administration would be made consistent with that position among the civilised nations of the world which had been conceded to her at the close of the Crimean War.

After narrating the previous promises of the Porte, dating from 1839, and ending in the Firmans and Proclamations which had just been issued, it pointed out that these promises had never been carried into

effect, and that there was no more prospect of any security in this respect than there had ever been. Equality before the law to all religions had not been given; the system of farming the taxes had not been abolished; justice had not been purified; the condition of the rural population had not been ameliorated. The new promises and proclamations could only excite aspirations without satisfying them. On the other hand, the Turkish arms had not been able to put down the insurrection; winter had suspended it, but in spring it would certainly revive. New elements of disturbance would then be added. In Bulgaria and in Crete fresh insurrections would arise. The Governments of Servia and Montenegro would be compelled by popular sympathies to take part in the contest. Under these circumstances, "the three Cabinets think that the only chance to avoid fresh complications is in a manifestation emanating from the Powers, and making clear their firm resolution to arrest the movement which menaces to involve the East." For this purpose a mere repetition of promises was not enough. "The Powers must be able to appeal to acts—clear, indisputable, practicable—in one word, that their action may be grounded on facts, not on programmes." The measures which were specified were these:—1st. Religious liberty, in the sense of religious equality, full and entire; 2nd. The abolition of tax-farming; 3rd. The exclusive application to Bosnia and Herzegovina of

their own direct taxation; 4. The appointment of an executory Commission to carry these reforms into effect, to be composed equally of Mahommedans and Christians. These reforms were to be effected without delay. There was a fifth, which would require time. This was the amelioration of the condition of the rural population, by some more satisfactory arrangement between the Christian Rajahs and the Mahommedan Agas, or landowners. The three Cabinets declare that they must obtain from the Sultan "his notification to the Powers of the acceptance of the points specified above." They say that even "the Christians would not, by this method, obtain the form of guarantee which they appear to demand; but they would find a relative security in the very fact that the reforms accorded would be recognised as indispensable by the Powers, and that the Porte would have pledged itself to Europe to carry them into execution." The note concludes thus:—"Such is the firm conviction resulting from a preliminary exchange of ideas between the Cabinets of Austro-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. Your Excellency is directed to bring this view of the case to the knowledge of the Court of St. James's, and to obtain its concurrence in the work of peace, the success of which our efforts tend to assure.

"If, as I hope, the views of the English Government accord with our own, we should propose, out of consideration for the dignity of the Porte, not to address

our advice to the latter in the form of a collective note, but to confine ourselves to inviting our representatives at Constantinople to act conjointly and in an identic manner towards the Sultan's Government in the sense of what we have set forth."

This Note was communicated to the British Cabinet on January 3, 1876.*

On the following day the French Government intimated to our Ambassador at Paris that, in their opinion, the proposal should be agreed to,† and in particular that they thought the demand that the acceptance of it by the Porte should be officially announced to the Powers, was "perfectly reasonable." The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs intimated a like opinion on the same day to our Ambassador at Rome.‡

On the 13th January, Sir H. Elliot reported that the Porte was desirous that England should join in the communication to be proposed by Austria, "unless it should prove altogether objectionable."

It appears, therefore, that all the Powers of Europe who were parties to the Treaty of 1856, except England, signified their immediate approval of the Note prepared by the three Cabinets of Austria, Germany, and Russia. It was not, however, till the 22nd January that an intimation was made by the British Cabinet to the Austrian Ambassador in London,

* Ibid., No. 56, p. 84. † Ibid., No. 58, p. 84.
‡ Ibid., No. 59, p. 85.

that the Andrassy Note would receive its "general support." A special interest attaches to the language of Austria at this early period of the negotiations. It has been assumed that nothing would have induced the Austro-Hungarian Government to have recourse to arms against Turkey, and it was certainly deeply interested in a peaceful solution of the dangers which had arisen. But the question is whether Austria was not disposed to the opinion that a forcible intervention by all the Powers of Europe might be the only means of averting a serious war; and whether Austria was not checked and discouraged in coming to this conclusion by the Cabinet of St. James'. Now on these questions we have the clearest evidence in the transactions connected with the Andrassy Note. In conversation with the Foreign Secretary, Count Beust "took occasion to observe, that the communication intended to be addressed to the Porte was not regarded by his Government in the light of mere good advice;" to which observation the English Secretary of State replied, that "he clearly understood this to be the Austrian point of view, but that so far as Her Majesty's Government was concerned, they were not prepared to do more than offer such friendly advice as the circumstances seemed to require."* To make farther sure on this point, the Austrian Ambassador, two days later, on the 24th January, again urged on

* Ibid., No. 70, p. 91.

the Foreign Secretary that the object of his Government "was not to give friendly counsel only, but to obtain a definite promise from the Porte;" and again, "that the Sublime Porte should enter into an explicit engagement towards the Guaranteeing Powers to carry out the reforms, and give a written promise to that effect." Count Beust added, that this was equally the view of the Russian, French, and Italian Governments, and that "he could hardly lay too much stress on the disappointment which his Government would experience if the British Government disagreed on this point."

The despatch of the British Cabinet formally expressing its opinion was dated on the following day, January 25, 1876.* The spirit of this despatch, and the object of it, are best explained by the covering letter to Sir H. Elliot.† He was reminded, for the benefit of the Porte, that Her Majesty's Government had from the beginning advised the Sultan to suppress the insurrection himself, and that he should not give it international importance by appealing to the other Powers. If the Porte had acted on this advice, there would have been no need for the Consular Mission. Her Majesty's Government had consented to take part in that Mission only because the Porte itself had asked them to do so. No good had come of it. What little benefit might have arisen from it was defeated by the "ill-advised proceedings of

* Ibid, No. 72, p. 92. † Ibid., No. 73, p. 96.

the Turkish troops, as reported by Consul Holmes on the 28th September." Such is the only allusion to—such is the only description given of—the treacherous act, narrated on a previous page,* by which the insurgents were decoyed into a position in which they were attacked by the Turkish troops. The Secretary of State goes on to say that the Note now proposed was sure to lead to farther diplomatic interference in the internal affairs of the Empire. But "the Porte has now again requested Her Majesty's Government not to hold aloof from the concerted action of the Powers. This request must be regarded as a pledge on the part of the Porte that the counsels of the Austro-Hungarian Government would be received in a friendly spirit." And after all, it was pointed out that "the proposals of Count Andrassy amount to little more than a request that the Porte will execute the Hatt-Scherif of 1839, the Hatti-Humayoun of 1856, and the Firman of 1875." Her Majesty's Government did not therefore consider that "the proposals of Count Andrassy conflict with the 9th Article of the Treaty of Paris. They look on his suggestion as a recommendation for adoption by the Porte in its endeavours to put an end to the insurrection, and as not involving any interference in the relations between the Sultan and his subjects, nor in the internal administration of the Empire." With these explanations, Sir H. Elliot was directed to give a "general support" to the Andrassy Note.

* Pp. 147, 148.

It will be seen that in the mode of giving this "general support" to the action of the European Powers, Her Majesty's Government here contrived to reduce the value of it to the lowest possible amount, and expressly to negative the significance of it as this had been explained by the Austrian Government. But more than this—it is distinctly implied that any such meaning, if it were entertained, would be a violation of the 9th Article of the Treaty of Paris. The Turks were thus encouraged to claim under that Treaty a licence and immunity which it never was intended to afford. It is evident therefore that the British Cabinet only joined the other Powers, first, because it was impossible to deny the justice of the demands made on Turkey; secondly, because it would be inconvenient to stand alone against the united opinion of all the other Cabinets of Europe; thirdly, because Turkey herself saw some advantage in accepting the communication. Sir H. Elliot was indeed instructed to repeat the good advice which our Ministers have never failed to give to the Turkish Government;—"what appears to Her Majesty's Government to be essential is, that the Porte should act promptly and vigorously in the execution of reforms." The one thing which the British Cabinet would not do was precisely the one thing which all the rest of Europe saw to be absolutely required, and that was, the giving of an intimation to the Porte that the Guaranteeing Powers had a right to require and demand that this execution of reforms

should be recorded on the footing of an engagement towards themselves. In its form the Andrassy Note did this in the mildest way. But in the union and concert of the Powers in making such a communication at all, it had a high significance. The British Cabinet reluctantly assented to its form, but carefully repudiated the meaning which could alone give to it any value.

It is not surprising that when the instructions to Sir H. Elliot were explained to the Porte, that Government was more than satisfied. On the 28th January he reported that "Raschid Pacha had expressed the most lively satisfaction at the tenor of the instructions that your Lordship is forwarding to me, of which I communicated to him a telegraphic summary."*

On the 13th February the Porte communicated to the British Ambassador its assent to four out of the five points in the Andrassy Note—that is to say, it had ordered by a new "Imperial Iradé" the immediate execution of these four suggestions, and declared itself "determined to put them in force in the two provinces, in their integrity."† This promise, like previous promises, was vouched for by a copy of fresh instructions to the representatives of the Sublime Porte, which were communicated to the Powers. The object of all this proceeding on the part of the Porte was thus frankly explained: "The Sublime Porte being convinced that the Powers are disposed

* Ibid., No. 84, p. 105. † Ibid., No. 93, Inclos. p. 109.

to exert by all the means in their power, a moral pressure, having for its object or effect the prompt pacification of the insurgent districts, in order to obviate the complications which might arise from the continuation of the troubles in the Herzogovina, and anxious once more to give a proof of its deference for the friendly counsel of the great Powers, as well as of its hearty desire to restore order and well-being among its misled subjects, I hasten to communicate to your Excellency the decision arrived at by His Imperial Majesty the Sultan," &c. &c.

The breath of this announcement was hardly out of the mouth of the Turkish Government, when new proofs of its incorrigible bad faith were communicated to the British Cabinet. Our Foreign Office, amidst the abundance of good advice which it was always ready to give, had very properly impressed upon the Porte that it was above all things necessary that it should appoint good men—men of energy and determination—to execute the promised reforms.* On the very day on which the new Proclamation was reported to our Government as having been issued in the Capital of Bosnia, amidst the universal indifference of both Mussulmans and Christians, it was reported also by the same authority, Vice-Consul Freeman, that the Turkish Government "is certainly most unfortunate at the present moment in its selection of officials."† The Foreign Secretary

* Ibid., No. 73, p. 98. † Turkey III., 1876, No. 9, p. 5.

was moved to remonstrate. He told Sir H. Elliot that "Her Majesty's Government have read this report with much dissatisfaction, as, if Mr. Freeman is correctly informed, it shows that the Porte is not acting on the advice of Her Majesty's Government, to employ active and trustworthy officers in the execution of the reforms."* Acts of financial corruption and injustice of the most flagrant kind were also reported by Sir H. Elliot about the same time, affecting the Sultan personally. The interest on the public debt had been reduced. In fulfilment of this reduction the proper abatement had been made on the coupons payable to the Sultan on the amount of that debt which was held by him. But an imperative order was sent to the Grand Vizier to make up the deficiency to the Sultan. Other creditors might bear the reduction, but the public-spirited Sovereign could not. And this order was given at a time when even the troops stationed in the disturbed districts remained unpaid, and when the Minister of War declared that "he could at no moment be surprised to hear that the troops in the Herzegovina refuse to act if kept in their present state of destitution." Well might Sir H. Elliot add, that under such conditions "the prospects of the Empire might well be looked upon with dismay."†

It was in the face of evidence such as this that the

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* Ibid., No. 18, p. 8. † Ibid., No. 8, p. 4.

British Cabinet continued steadily to pursue the policy of active diplomatic intervention against the insurgents, of as active diplomatic support to the corrupt Government of the Sultan, and of steady opposition to any farther combined action of the European Powers for a just and effective pacification. In every Capital of Europe, and in every province where we had an agent, our Ambassadors and our Consuls were busy in deprecating sympathy with the people whom they knew to be suffering from intolerable wrongs, and in thwarting every work, even of common charity and humanity, which might, however indirectly, help to give them even temporary relief. Thus, when numbers of people had fled to Austria, and when out of mere compassion they were saved from starvation by the help of the Government, our Ministers and Consuls appear to have been busy sympathising with the urgent demands of Turkey that these refugees should no longer be supported, but should be forced to return to the country from which they had been compelled to flee. This may seem hardly credible. But the official papers contain abundant evidence of the fact. Thus in the despatch of Acting-Consul Freeman, from Bosnia Serai, of the 2nd March, we find the following passage:—"The Austrian Consul-General here informs me that stringent measures are being taken to insure a strict observance of neutrality on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian frontier; and that

the refugees from those provinces have been informed that after the expiration of fifteen days they will no longer receive any assistance, either in food or money, from the Austrian Government. Small as the sum was hitherto given them, the withdrawal of such aid will doubtless be the cause of great misery; but yet I fear it will not influence the return of the refugees to their homes. In every direction the insurgents seem to be animated by the same sentiment—a determination to fight to the last rather than again submit to Turkish authority."* In the same spirit, and indicating precisely the same action on the part of England, our Ambassador at Vienna reported, on the 8th March:† "It is hoped here, however, that when the conciliatory measures to be taken by the Turkish authorities are more advanced, these objections will be got over (namely, objections arising out of the fear that returning refugees would not be safe), and the refugees who refuse to return will receive no assistance from the Government after the end of the month."

Now it is to be observed that this action of the British Government was continued not only in the face of the general and overwhelming evidence that no faith whatever could be placed in the promises of the Turks, but also in the face of detailed and specific evidence that returning refugees from

* Ibid., No. 45, p. 18. † Ibid., No. 46, p. 19.

Austria would be exposed to the most imminent danger, if not indeed to certain death. Thus, eighteen days before this despatch of Sir Andrew Buchanan, Acting-Consul Freeman had reported* that the Mussulman population had not been disarmed, and that as long as one part of the population were armed and the other part not allowed to carry arms, "there could be no semblance of equality." Before the 4th March Sir H. Elliot had asked the Turkish officer who was appointed to carry the new reforms into effect, "what power he would have of executing prompt and summary punishment in the case of outrages against the refugees? And," proceeds our Ambassador, "I cannot say that his answer is satisfactory."† There were to be three different authorities in the province, and Sir H. Elliot could not find "that any one of them possessed the power of carrying out a summary capital punishment." On the 10th March Acting-Consul Freeman reported distinctly that the "refugees would be quite as unwilling to put themselves under the protection of a brutal and undisciplined soldiery as to incur the risks of being driven from their homes by the insurgents. Although the Austrian Government may refuse to afford them farther assistance, they will probably be kept from absolute starvation by private charity; whereas, were they to return, I really do not know how they would subsist, for the local authorities have

* Ibid., No. 24, p. 11

neither the means nor the necessary organisation at their command to carry out the promise of the Porte to supply them with the food, seed, and building materials, of which they would stand in need."* On the 18th March Sir Andrew Buchanan himself reported that the Turkish force in the province would be quite inadequate for the protection of the refugees, even if the insurrection were at an end and its services were not required in the field;† and two days later Consul Holmes gave detailed estimates of the number of refugees, who then were supposed to amount to not less than 156,000, and of the sum which would be needed to resettle them, showing that the Porte had no resources at all adequate for the purpose.‡ Notwithstanding these facts the Turkish Government seems to have constantly persisted in urging the Austrian Government to make the refugees "return to their homes;" and it is only too evident that in this contention they had the sympathy and assistance of the British Government.

The effect of this policy, and of the disposition of the English Cabinet to support the Turkish Government at any risk and at any cost to the insurgents, soon became apparent in the growing insolence of the Pashas. The Austrian Government, whose immediate interests were most deeply concerned in procuring a real pacification of the insurgent provinces,

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* Ibid., No. 29, p. 46. † Ibid., No. 76, p. 45.
‡ Ibid., No. 98, Inclos. p. 55.

was the first to perceive and to feel this result. They sent Baron Rodich to communicate both with the Turkish officers and with the insurgents. We have Baron Rodich's impression recorded in an interesting despatch from Mr. Monson, our Consul at Ragusa, dated March 30, 1876:* "Moukhtar Pacha left Ragusa for Trebigné yesterday morning, and Ali Pacha started this morning for the same town. From all that I can learn, the impression produced upon Baron Rodich by the two Pashas is, that the Porte has no desire to conciliate the insurgents.

"Baron Rodich and General Jovanovics called on me yesterday, and said that the Proclamation issued by Wassa Effendi (of which I have not as yet the translation, having only seen it in the Slav text) contained no reference to guarantees, reforms, or anything else, except the clemency of the Sultan to those who submitted within four weeks, and the threat of confiscation of the property of those who did not. That not only did the Pashas show no conciliatory spirit, but that a fresh massacre of seven Christians (three men and four women) had just taken place in the vicinity of Bilek, and a raid across the frontier near Trebigné had been committed within the week upon some sheep belonging to Austrian subjects; who had, however, beaten off the Turks, and saved their pro-

* Ibid., No. 116, p. 64.

perty. In the face of outrages such as these, how could it be expected that any good could be done either with the refugees or the insurgents?

"I saw Wassa Effendi shortly before this conversation, and he absolutely repudiated the idea that any one had the right to ask the Porte for further guarantees; his argument being, that the acceptance of Count Andrassy's Note and the Sultan's Proclamation of Amnesty were guarantees enough, and that the Porte was entitled to claim that confidence should be reposed in the intention of the authorities to carry out the reforms, and fulfil the promises of succour for the returned insurgents and refugees. He declared in the most solemn manner that he himself would not retain his position as President of the Reform Commission for a day if he found that he was unable to act honestly in this sense."

But insolent as this language was, it exactly represented the position taken by the English Cabinet, and the position which it was encouraging the Porte to take. Not only without the smallest reason to believe or hope that the Turks would perform the promises they had made, but with the best reason to fear and to know that they would not do so, the British agents were everywhere treating those promises as a sufficient reason against any farther interference with the Porte. At this very moment, as if to sum up all the evidence of the incorrigible character of the Government of the Sultan, Sir Henry Elliot was reporting (on the

28th March) that the corruption of the judicial service of the Empire was not getting better, but was getting worse. Men of integrity and character would not accept the posts. Those who did accept them depended for their remuneration on illicit gains. "It is with regret," he says, "that I have to inform your Lordship, that while the professions of the Government have been of a determination to raise the administration of justice, its measures seem calculated to farther debase it."* In its dealings with the insurgents, carried on under shelter of its pretended acceptance of the Andrassy Note, it was acting with an odious mixture of cunning and ferocity. It issued a Proclamation dated on the 24th of March, professing to give four weeks to the insurgents to lay down their arms; but it was only put in circulation about the 1st of April, "thus eliminating a week of the period of grace."† In the terms of this Proclamation nothing but the barest reference was made to the reforms, which, in deference to the Great Powers, it had professed its consent to grant. Consul Holmes was obliged to report on the 30th March,‡ that "nothing had yet been done to give confidence to the Christians," but much had been done to show that no such confidence could possibly be entertained. Orders had been received nominally to abolish certain taxes,

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* Ibid., No. 108, p. 60. † Ibid., No. 119, p. 67.
‡ Ibid., No. 120, p. 68.

but these orders were accompanied by an injunction, "that there should be no loss to the Treasury." Of course the taxes had to be collected even more stringently than before, and under conditions which rendered them doubly oppressive. Consul Holmes was told by the authorities that "this must be an absurdity committed by the Finance Department. The people, however," he adds with much simplicity, "naturally attribute it to bad faith on the part of the Government."

Meantime, as might have been expected, the insurrection was extending. The neighbouring populations in Austria, and the adjacent small States of Servia and Montenegro, were acting upon their natural sympathies, and their not less natural ambitions. The Austro-Hungarian Government, which was sincerely and selfishly desirous of peace, was again moved to action by the necessities of the case. They sent Baron Rodich to communicate personally both with the Turkish commanders and with the leaders of the insurgents. We have seen the impression made upon him by the Pashas. On the 6th of April he met the insurgent chiefs, having procured a twelve days' suspension of hostilities. One prominent demand made by the insurgents had reference to a matter with which it was unquestionably most difficult for any foreign intervention to deal—namely, the agrarian relations between the Christian peasants of the two disturbed provinces and the Mussulmen Begs, or landowners. The form which

that demand took was moreover one which could not, and did not, make a favourable impression on the Austrian officer. The insurgent chiefs demanded that one-third of the land should be made over to the Christian population. It had long been known, however, to those best acquainted with the condition of those provinces, that grievances of an agrarian nature were among the most formidable of which the population complained; and it must always be remembered that when the relations between the occupier and the owners of the soil are not regulated by custom or by contract, but are purely arbitrary, and rendered doubly uncertain by animosities of race and of religion, they are matters really of political administration, and are inseparably connected with the conduct of Government. In the particular case of those provinces, it appears that the grievances complained of had arisen, in part at least, out of the direct action of the Turkish Government interfering with ancient privileges and rights belonging to the agricultural population. In the report which was presented to his Government by M. Durando, the Italian Consular Commissioner, upon this subject, "he points out that the demand for a third of the lands must not be considered as indicative of communistic aspirations, but as a clearly expressed desire for the revocation of the agrarian regulations of 1851 and 1862, which abolished the ancient feudal privileges of the tillers of the soil."

The remaining demands made by the insurgents are remarkable, because it is evident that they were practically adopted as the basis of the next diplomatic action taken by the three Great Powers from which the Andrassy Note had emanated. These remaining demands were as follows :—The second was concentration of Turkish troops into certain specified garrisons, and the withdrawal of them from the rest of the provinces; the third was the resettlement of the refugees in their homes, and the rebuilding of the houses, churches, &c., with food for a year, and freedom from taxation for three years; the fourth was the retention of arms by the Christian population until the Mussulmans should also be disarmed, and until the reforms promised were in process of execution; the fifth was the full association of the Christian leaders with the functionaries of the Government in the execution of the promised reforms; and the sixth and last condition was "that as the insurgents could not trust to the simple promises of the Porte, which it has never been known to keep," the funds to be given to the Christians should be placed in the hands of an European Commission, which should be charged with the proper expenditure of the same.

The address of the insurgent chiefs to Baron Rodich setting forth these demands was dated April 7, 1876.

The general nature of the demands likely to be made by the insurgents was perfectly well known to some of the European Powers, and might have been

well known to all of them. Every Consul who cared to inquire had the means of ascertaining them. The substance of them, but without the agrarian article, was published in the *Agence Russe* at St. Petersburg on the same day on which they were delivered to Baron Rodich.* Of course all the agents of the English Government, without hesitation and without discrimination, spoke of them as "inadmissible." Such was the language of our Ambassador at Vienna on the 9th April.† Such also was, at first, the language of the Austrian Government,‡ which was desirous of strictly limiting any farther action on the part of the European Powers to a demand for the execution of the reforms already promised by the Porte in its acceptance of the Andrassy Note. The Russian Government was "of opinion that the conditions of the insurgents ought not to be entirely rejected, or the doors thus closed to the possibility of an arrangement."§ Our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, in reporting this opinion on the 12th April, reported it at the same time with this comment: "It is evident to me that the Russian Government are most anxious for a pacification on any suitable terms." Accordingly, on the following day, Sir Andrew Buchanan was informed at Vienna that any difference of opinion on this matter between the two

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* Ibid., No. 122, p. 69.
† Ibid., No. 123, p. 71.
‡ Ibid., No. 131, p. 75.
§ Ibid., No. 138, p. 79.

Governments had disappeared, and that they were now united in opinion that the conditions already formulated must remain the limit of the concessions to be granted to the Christian population of the insurgent provinces, but with such explanations as would satisfy the chiefs that all that was reasonable in their demands would be secured to them.* It is clear, however, from a despatch of Lord A. Loftus, dated two days later, April 14, that there was still a sensible difference of opinion between the Russian and Austrian Governments. It appears that Count Andrassy had asked Prince Gortchakow to make with him "a joint representation to the Prince of Montenegro urging him to insist on the acceptance by the insurgent chiefs of the terms offered to them."† This had been refused, and Prince Gortchakow again expressed his opinion that the counter-proposals of the insurgent chiefs ought not to have been so summarily rejected. He observed that there was nothing in them which was in opposition to the spirit of Count Andrassy's proposals. At the same time, Lord Augustus Loftus reported a great anxiety on the part of the Russian Chancellor to maintain a perfect co-operation and understanding with Austria, and to prevent anything which could lead to a divergence of opinion between the two Cabinets in regard to Eastern affairs.

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* Ibid., No. 139, p. 80. † Ibid., No. 151, p. 90.

The Russian Government seems to have been perfectly open on the subject both to the English and to the Turkish Governments. Prince Gortchakow communicated his opinion to the Turkish Ambassador at St. Petersburg that the Porte should express a readiness to examine the last propositions of the insurgents. This advice was received at Constantinople with alarm by the Porte, and with sympathetic anxiety by the representatives of the British Cabinet. It was the line of the Turkish Government to assert that the mere profession of acceptance by the Sultan of the Andrassy Note had been all that the Powers had asked, and that this profession having been made, they were bound to demand nothing more, but to do all in their power to frustrate the insurrectionary movement. The Porte described its own conduct as that of "having frankly followed the course that was advised."* It is humiliating to find that in holding this language the Pashas of Constantinople were followed by the Ambassadors of England. Sir Henry Elliot's representations on the subject were embodied in a Memorandum by Sir Andrew Buchanan at Vienna, which was read by him to Count Andrassy on the 20th April.† In that Memorandum the Turkish Government, of whose bad faith the British Government had received and was daily receiving accumulated

* Ibid., No. 174, p. 104. † Ibid., No. 156, p. 93.

evidence, was compassionately described as "surprised and pained at finding that the support of Austria and Russia, which had been promised if the Porte would follow a certain course, was to be withheld." An assurance was given that, nevertheless, "they would pay attention to any reasonable proposals which may be made to them directly by the insurgents." When this Memorandum was placed in the hands of the Austrian Minister, the English Foreign Office knew that the Turks had not "followed the course which the Powers had recommended;" and it had not the smallest reason to believe that the Porte would deal justly or reasonably with the insurgents. Yet the language thus held by Sir A. Buchanan was nothing more than the language of his chief. On the 28th April the English Foreign Secretary addressed to Lord Augustus Loftus a despatch conceived exactly in the same spirit, quoted with sympathy the claim made by the Porte as founded on "the deference shown by Turkey to the wishes of the Powers," and declared that "Her Majesty's Government think there is justice in the representation made by the Porte."*

It is needless to say that the Russian Chancellor repudiated at once this misrepresentation of the action taken by the Powers in the transaction of the Andrassy Note, and this repudiation was in the possession of the English Foreign Office two days

* Ibid., No. 178, p. 107.

before the Foreign Secretary made himself party to the fallacious plea which it exposed. On the 22nd April Lord Augustus Loftus had been asked to call on Prince Gortchakow, and the important conversation which followed had been received in London on the 26th. The Prince read to Lord Augustus a letter which he had sent to General Ignatieff at Constantinople for the information of the Turkish Government. In that letter the Prince had declared that "the Imperial Government had never, as stated by the Porte, given any promise that if the Andrassy Note were accepted by the Porte the insurrection should be quelled. All that Russia had done was to promise that her best efforts should be given towards the pacification on the condition that the reforms accepted by the Porte should be faithfully carried out. He had therefore asked Gabouli Pacha (Turkish Ambassador at St. Petersburg) if he could cite one single instance in which any of the promises given by the Porte had yet been carried out. "Not a single step," said the Prince, "has yet been made by the Porte towards the fulfilment of those promises."* No answer was or could be given by the Turkish Government to this challenge. No answer was or could be given to it by the English Minister. But not the less was the Turkish plea urged both from Constantinople and from London as if it were just and valid.

One suggestion indeed seems to have been made

* Ibid., No. 163, p. 98.

verbally by the British Cabinet about this time, which is characteristic of the policy it pursued, and which elicited from the Government to which it was addressed a remarkable reply. Some time before the 23rd of April the Austrian Ambassador in London came to understand that it was the opinion of the Foreign Secretary "that it might be expedient to grant territorial concessions to Montenegro, with a view to securing Prince Nicholas' honest co-operation in any future measures which may be adopted for promoting a satisfactory arrangement."* The policy aimed at in making concessions to Montenegro was evident enough. By this means a powerful friend might be detached from the cause of the populations who were in arms against the oppression of the Turks. All our agents, both Consular and Ambassadorial, were reporting, of course, that the insurrection was entirely due to "foreign intrigues." To bribe off the people and Government of indomitable Montenegro from affording any help to their co-religionists around them, would save much trouble, if it could be accomplished. The Austrian Minister's comment on this reported suggestion of the English Foreign Office is given by Sir Andrew Buchanan on the 23rd April. Count Andrassy would have nothing to do with it. Territorial changes once begun in favour of Montenegro would, he observed, be immediately claimed by Servia, by

* Ibid., No. 167, p. 100.

Croatia, by Roumania, and by Greece. Besides which, Count Andrassy broadly hinted that he regarded the proposal as dishonourable. "To be trusted," he said, "by those with whom he had to deal, had always been in his opinion an essential to success in private and in political affairs." He had required of the Sultan not territorial cessions, but only the adoption of necessary reforms in the insurgent provinces. He would not expose himself to the imputation that in asking this he was really looking forward to obtain from the Porte a cession of territory to Montenegro. Neither did he choose to be possibly regarded as the dupe of others—if Montenegro itself had been acting with the insurgents for the same ends. He could not submit to either of these alternatives.

On receiving a telegraphic account of this conversation, the English Foreign Secretary on the 26th of April denied that "he had given any support to the proposed cession of territory to Montenegro under present circumstances, not feeling sure whether any such proposal might not be regarded as a proof of weakness on the part of the Porte, and so encourage rather than disarm opposition:" but he added, "I think it a question well worthy of consideration, whether, in the event of peace being restored, the cession to Montenegro of some territory situated on the plain might not be advantageous."* In reply to this, on the 2nd May, Sir A. Buchanan reported the persistent

* Ibid., No. 166, p. 99.

opposition of Count Andrassy to any such proposal. He declared that the maintenance of the territorial *status quo* was the basis of all the proposals made to the Porte, and that the demands made upon it were limited to the execution of administrative reforms. He repeated, that if the chapter of territorial changes were once opened, "the scramble for Turkish provinces will begin, and it will be impossible to prevent or postpone eventualities which are to be expected from a dissolution or dismemberment of the Turkish Empire."*

Although this may seem to be, and really was in itself, a comparatively trifling incident in the diplomatic history of the Eastern Question, it has a special interest in connexion with a matter of capital importance. We have already seen the declared reluctance of the English Cabinet to join in, or to sanction in any way, the interference of the European Powers in the internal affairs of Turkey. The best, and indeed the only, excuse for this feeling lay in the suspicion or the fear that some of those Powers, and especially the three Imperial Courts who had first acted together in framing the Andrassy Note, had some secret understanding or design to reopen the Eastern Question in all its breadth, and to bring about fundamental changes in the destination of the European provinces of Turkey. Now it was in its bearing upon this fear or suspicion that the language of Count

* Ibid., No. 212, p. 123.

Andrassy in reference to Montenegro, had an importance which ought not to have been, and ought not now to be, mistaken or overlooked. That language proved that the Austro-Hungarian Government, which was the Government most nearly concerned, had nothing more earnestly at heart, as essential to its own interests, than to limit European action to the minimum that was consistent with any hope of the possibility of maintaining peace. Austria did not wish to disturb the territorial *status quo*. It simply desired to secure such measures of reform in the administration of the Turkish provinces as might reassure the population, and take off the pressure upon its own resources and authority, which was being exerted by the just and natural sympathies of its own subjects. Clearly, therefore, every consideration of expediency, as well as of justice and humanity, pointed to the encouragement of this wise and moderate policy on the part of the Austro-Hungarian Government, and to a cordial association of all the European Powers in giving it effect. Towards the end of April the English Cabinet knew that the insurrection was extending. They knew, moreover, that it was justified by the conduct of the Turkish Government. Its own agents, who were most vehemently Turkish in their sympathies, were obliged to confess, and were continually confessing, that the insurgents were right in standing out for securities which hitherto had not been offered them. Thus, on the 1st May, the Foreign

Secretary received from Consul Holmes copy of a despatch to Sir H. Elliot, in which, speaking of the demands of the leaders of the insurrection, he said: "In these demands there is evidence of the profound distrust with which every promise of the Turkish Government is regarded, and I cannot say they are without justification. The Christians are afraid to place themselves unarmed in the power of their old masters, whom they know they have irreparably injured. They are informed of the state of Turkish finances, and are naturally anxious to know how they are to be fed and given the means of cultivation, when they are aware that there is not money enough to pay the troops, zaptiehs, and other employés. They dread also the presence among them of the hungry and undisciplined soldiers."* Yet it was in the light of all this authentic information from its own most trusted agents, both as to the just and moderate policy of the Austrian Government, and as to the absolute necessity of meeting the reasonable demands of the insurgents, that we find the English Cabinet adhering to its stolid opposition to every effort at union among the Powers of Europe to bring about some mode of pacifying the revolted provinces, without the necessity of a bloody and revolutionary war.

It was on the 4th of May that the Russian Ambassador in London came to the Foreign Office, and gave a full

* Ibid., No. 183, Inclos. p. 110.

explanation of the views of his Government, and of an intended meeting in the course of the next week of the three Imperial Governments at Berlin.* Count Schouvalow told Lord Derby that by this meeting no exclusive action was intended, as "it was the earnest desire of his Government that whatever course of action was to be decided upon should be the result of agreement, not among three Powers only, but among six." On the previous day, Count Andrassy had told our Ambassador at Vienna that he had been invited to meet Prince Gortchakow at Berlin.† On the 5th, our Ambassador at Berlin gave some farther details as to the proposed meeting,* and especially explained that the German Government having no special interest beyond the maintenance of peace, "would be glad to give their moral support to any pacific solution of the question which their Austrian and Russian allies might agree upon."‡

It would be difficult to conceive conditions more favourable than these for effective action, and at the same time for the most conservative action of the European Powers. And it is remarkable that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dropped no hint to the Russian Ambassador that he objected altogether to the interference of Europe with the Turks. On the contrary, he told Count Schouvalow,

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* Ibid., No. 218, p. 125. † Ibid., No. 213, p. 123.
‡ Ibid., No. 217, p. 124.

when that Minister expressed a hope that not three Powers only, but six, would be brought to an agreement, that "he had heard this last expression of opinion with much satisfaction, and entirely concurred in it."* The Foreign Secretary confined himself entirely to suggesting difficulties and to stating objections, such as that "there appeared to be a general agreement that something ought to be done, but no agreement or approach to agreement as to what it should be." He suggested also, that it was too soon to despair of the success of the Andrassy Note, and spoke of the "difficulty of asking the Porte to make farther concessions after the unreserved acceptance by the Sultan of those formerly proposed." But no avowal was made, nor indeed was any hint given by the British Government, that it desired to thwart and prevent, as far as in it lay, any farther European intervention.

On the 13th May Lord Odo Russell, our Ambassador at Berlin, received an invitation from Prince Bismarck, inviting him to meet the Ambassadors of France and Italy, as well as those of Austria and Russia.† At that meeting, the famous Berlin Memorandum was read, which embodied the views of the Chancellors, and in which they solicited the co-operation of the Great Powers. It was put forward as an attempted pacification of the Herzegovina, rendered

* Ibid., No. 218, p. 125. † Ibid., No. 248, p. 137.

necessary by "the alarming state of affairs in Turkey."

The Berlin Memorandum set forth the demands previously made in the Andrassy Note. It narrated the acceptance of these by the Porte, and the formal communication of this acceptance to the Cabinets of Europe. It declared that the Powers had thus acquired a moral right of watching over the performance of the promises thus given. It alleged the failure of these promises. It asserted it to be "therefore essential to establish certain guarantees of a nature to insure beyond doubt the legal and full application of the measures agreed upon between the Powers and the Porte. It was more than ever urgent to press the Government of the Sultan to decide on setting itself seriously to work to fulfil the engagements it had contracted towards Europe." For this purpose it was required that there should be a suspension of arms for two months, and the five following points were indicated as the bases of a peace:—1st. The provision of means sufficient to settle the refugees in their homes. 2nd. The distribution of these means by a mixed commission, with a Herzegovinian Christian as President. 3rd. The concentration of Turkish troops into certain places. 4th. The retention of arms by the Christians. 5th. The Consuls or Delegates of the Powers to have a watch over the application of the promised reforms, and the repatriation of the people. The Memorandum farther proceeded

thus in its closing paragraph: "If, however, the armistice were to expire without the effort of the Powers being successful in attaining the ends they have in view, the three Imperial Courts are of opinion that it would become necessary to supplement their diplomatic action by the sanction of an agreement, with a view to such efficacious measures as might appear to be demanded in the interest of general peace, to check the evil and prevent its development."*

On the same day on which this Memorandum was communicated to the British Government, the 15th May, they also heard from our Ambassador at St. Petersburg that the most serious consequences depended on our dealing with it. The Russian Chancellor declared that "if the efforts of European Powers to effect a pacification between the Porte and the insurgents should prove to be unavailing, although he would do nothing to incite Servia and Montenegro, he could no longer restrain them from action. There could be no doubt," said his Highness, "that in such an event the insurrection would assume much larger proportions, and a flame would be kindled in Bulgaria, Epirus, Thessaly, and Albania, which the Porte, with its weakened resources, would be unable to extinguish; and the Christian Powers of Europe, awakened by public opinion to the call of humanity, would have to interpose to arrest the effusion of blood."†

* Ibid., No. 248, Inclos. p. 139–41. † Ibid., No. 250, p. 142–3.

On the same day, also, the English Cabinet was informed that both the Governments of France and of Italy had agreed to support the proposals of the three northern Powers at Constantinople.*

It was very easy, of course, to point out difficulties and objections to the particular proposals of the Berlin Memorandum, as it would have been to point out similar objections to every possible proposal on so difficult an undertaking as any peaceful reform of Turkey. It was all the more easy to do so when the real desire of the English Cabinet was that no farther proposals of any kind should be urged by Europe on the Porte. The Foreign Secretary accordingly lost no time in suggesting such difficulties and objections in detail. They were stated to the German Ambassador upon the same day. One of them seems singular enough when we recollect what had happened when the Turks, by a gross breach of faith, had stolen a march upon the insurgent chiefs assembled to confer with the Consular mission. "The Turks," Lord Derby suggested, "might engage to maintain an armistice, and would no doubt do so; but what reliance could be placed on the insurgents observing it?"† Other difficulties were more real. The Porte, it was said, had not money for the required expenditure, and it could not borrow. If the Turkish troops were concentrated in a few places they could not maintain peace between the Christian and Ma-

* Ibid., No. 261, p. 148. † Ibid., No. 259, p. 147-8.

hometan populations. The insurgents would be encouraged to hold out if they knew that by doing so they could get farther intervention on their behalf. These, however, were only first impressions The Cabinet was to consider the matter carefully.

In the meantime, however, on the 16th May, the Turkish Ambassador was informed* of the unfavourable impression of the Foreign Secretary. The opposition, indeed, of the British Government, and of all its agents, was now so universally known, that before it had as yet given any formal reply, the Austrian Ambassador in London was ordered by his Government to address an urgent representation to the Foreign Secretary, and to ask whether it would not at least join in the demand for an armistice, even if it could not support the particular bases of farther negotiation laid down in the Memorandum. But to this also Lord Derby, on the 18th May. stated his objections—one of them being, as before, the perfect confidence which might justly be placed in the engagements of Turkish Generals, as compared with the distrust which must attach to the insurgent chiefs.† The Austrian Ambassador seems to have endeavoured to extract from the English Minister some alternative proposals—something better than mere objections to everything proposed by others, in a matter involving great difficulties, and great dangers

* Ibid., No. 263, p. 150. † Ibid., No. 266, p. 151.

to the peace of Europe. But his inquiries were in vain. "Some farther conversation followed," says the official account of this interview, "in the course of which I told Count Beust that I had no plan to propose, but that it seemed to me idle to talk of putting an end to the war so long as the Prince and people of Montenegro were allowed to give it active support and assistance, as they were doing now, being at the same time guarded by the intervention of the Powers from all fear of retribution on the part of Turkey."

It is needless to say that this was adopting the Turkish view of the whole position of affairs, and was assuming that the Turkish Government was the injured party in the troubles which had arisen.

The formal despatch to our Ambassador at Berlin, which set forth the determination of the British Cabinet, was dated on the day following this interview with the German Ambassador, the 19th May.* It announced the refusal of Her Majesty's Government to co-operate in the policy which the three Governments had invited them to pursue, and to which all the other Powers had given their adhesion. Again, however, this refusal was not based on any avowed objection to the intervention of Europe; on the contrary, we have a renewed profession of approval of concerted action. "Her Majesty's Government appreciate the advantage of concerted action by the

* Ibid., No. 275, p. 171.

Powers in all that relates to the questions arising out of the insurrection." The resolution of the Government was based on a detailed examination of the five points in the Berlin Memorandum, and on the objections to which each of these were liable. These were the same as had been foreshadowed by the Foreign Secretary to the Russian Ambassador four days before. The explanation of them was carefully balanced, so as to damage as much as possible the proposed concert of the Powers, but yet to evade as much as possible the responsibility of refusing to concur in it. An armistice might be injurious to the Turks; therefore Her Majesty's Government could not ask it: but neither would they dissuade the Turks from granting one. The Porte could not afford the outlay for the repatriation of the refugees and insurgents; therefore Her Majesty's Government could not make that demand: but neither could they deny that it would be wise on the part of the Porte to do all it could in this direction. The concentration of Turkish troops would be delivering the whole country to anarchy, particularly when the insurgents were to retain their arms. The Consular supervision would reduce the authority of the Sultan to nullity; and in that case the supervision would be impossible. The insurgents would be encouraged by the threat of farther intervention. As to the safety of the subjects of the European Powers resident in Turkey, in the excited state of the Mussulman popu-

lation, Her Majesty's Government had taken naval measures with a view to their protection. But Her Majesty's Government did not apprehend any such danger; and they urged that "care should be taken that the naval forces of Foreign Powers are not employed in any manner contrary to the treaty rights of the Porte, or subversive of the Sultan's authority."

Whilst the formal vindication of the course taken by the English Cabinet was thus strictly confined to objections against the particular proposals of the Berlin Memorandum, two other despatches of the same date were allowed to indicate the real objections which were determining the policy of the Government. Jealousy was expressed of the three Imperial Powers, and suspicion of the initiative which they had already taken in the Andrassy Note, and which they were now again taking in the Berlin Memorandum. To our Ambassador at Berlin it was pointed out that none of the proposals of the Berlin Memorandum had previously been discussed with the British Government, nor, so far as known, with the other Powers signatories of the Treaty of Paris. If repeated to Prince Bismarck, this observation would have indicated jealousy if not offence, and would have amounted to a reproach. But as the German Chancellor is not a man of a meek and quiet spirit, the responsibility was prudently thrown on Lord Odo Russell of judging whether it would be expedient or not to administer this rebuke.*

* Ibid., No. 277, p. 173.

To Sir Henry Elliot, as usual, and for the benefit of the Turkish Government, a much more frank communication was addressed. The fundamental objection to European intervention, which had been disavowed to Russia and to Austria, was confessed and reiterated. "I have to point out to your Excellency," said the Foreign Secretary, "that Her Majesty's Government have, since the outbreak of the insurrection in Bosnia and the Herzegovina, deprecated the diplomatic intervention of other Powers in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire." The Porte had begged them to take part in the Consular Mission. The Porte had again begged them to support the Andrassy Note. They scarcely expected the same request to be made on the present occasion. But even if the Turkish Government should again desire it, Her Majesty's Government could not comply, because "they could not conscientiously advise the Porte to accept conditions which they did not consider as possible or feasible." But neither, on the other hand, would Her Majesty's Government take the responsibility of counselling the Porte "to resist any advice or proposals which it might consider practicable or advantageous." Then followed a sentence which must be quoted in full, since both in the faults with which Turkey is upbraided, and in the crimes and iniquities on which perfect silence is maintained, we have a clear indication of the predominant desire of the English Cabinet that the insurrection should be simply put down, without the smallest

reference to the question whether it was justified or not. "Her Majesty's Government cannot conceal from themselves that the gravity of the situation has arisen, in a great measure, from the weakness or apathy of the Porte in dealing with the insurrection in its earlier stages, and from the want of confidence in Turkish statesmanship and powers of Government, shown by the financial, military, and administrative collapse into which the country has been allowed to fall. The responsibility of the condition of affairs must rest with the Sultan and his Government; and all that can be done by the Government of Her Majesty is to give such friendly counsel as circumstances may require. They cannot control events to which the neglect of ordinary principles of good government may expose the Turkish Empire."*

Feeble and helpless as the policy was which is announced in this paragraph, it was at least an intelligible policy if it had been acted upon honestly and consistently. On the assumption that England had no more to do with, and no more responsibility in, the misrule of Turkey than it has with the customs of Dahomey, a policy of abstention, pure and simple, with the affairs of a Government which could or would do nothing to save itself, was a policy which might in the abstract be defended. Unfortunately, the assumption which is fundamental to the defence of such a

* Ibid., No. 278, p. 173.

policy in the case of Turkey, is an assumption which is not true. England, with the other Powers of Europe, had upheld the Government of Turkey, and up to that moment had been continuing to uphold it. Still, this support might now be withdrawn. England might have announced that she withdrew from the obligagations undertaken in 1856 on the ground that the follies and the crimes of Turkey rendered it both morally and physically impossible to uphold her. Practically, however, such a policy was impossible. England had her share, and, at the lowest valuation of it, an important share, in those common European interests on which the Treaties of 1856 had been founded. The British Government could not look with perfect indifference on whatever fate might befall Turkey from the action of the rest of Europe, even although that fate might be well deserved. The policy of abstention, therefore, which appears to be involved in the Foreign Secretary's despatch to Sir H. Elliot, and in the whole conduct of the English Cabinet on the Berlin Memorandum, was not a policy to which it either could adhere, or to which it had any deliberate intention of adhering. Their language was merely the language of irresolution, the language of men who, in a great crisis, had not the vigour or the foresight to come to any determinate conclusion. Accordingly, in the course of a very few days they had resumed their patronage of Turkey, and on the 24th May we find the

English Foreign Secretary advising the Porte how best to defeat the Berlin Memorandum by the familiar expedient to which he had himself resorted, of taking objections and asking explanations in detail.* On the same day a despatch was addressed to Sir H. Elliot, desiring him to warn the Porte that it "must not count upon more than the moral support of Her Majesty's Government in the event of no satisfactory solution of the present difficulties being found." But the moral support of England was all that was wanted at the time. And this was promised too, at a time when nothing could be alleged as to any reasonable expectation of Reform in Turkey, and even at a moment when the British Government had just been informed of recourse being had to the employment of Bashi-Bazouks.

The objections of detail taken by the English Cabinet to the Berlin Memorandum, were at once met by Prince Bismarck by the declaration that these points were entirely "open to discussion, that they might be modified according to circumstances, and that he, for one, would willingly entertain any improvement which Her Majesty's Government might have to propose."‡ But this invitation elicited no response. The position was, that England objected to everything proposed by others, and had nothing to

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* Ibid., No. 295, p. 188. † Turkey, III. 1877.
‡ Turkey, III. 1876. No. 286, p. 178.

propose herself. Continued trust in the Turks was her only suggestion. This obstructive and unworthy position was maintained in the face of urgent remonstrances and exhortations from all the other Powers. It is not too much to say that the course taken by England was heard of with consternation by every Cabinet in Europe. France implored Her Majesty's Government to reconsider its decision, and declared that persistence in it would, at such a momentous crisis, be nothing short of a "public calamity."* She "could not conceal the apprehensions for the future to which this refusal had given rise."† Italy did the same.‡ The German Chancellor showed his usual penetration in expressing to Lord Odo Russell his hope that if England would do nothing to support the other Powers, it would at least do nothing "that could encourage the resistance of the Turkish Government to their combined efforts in the interest of a speedy settlement of the difficulties they had undertaken to grapple with."§ On the 29th of May both the German and Russian Ambassadors separately‖ inquired of the Foreign Secretary whether he had not communicated the Berlin proposals to Turkey, and whether he had not encouraged the Porte to resist them. Count Schouvalow, in particular, observed

* Ibid., No. 292, p. 187. † Ibid., No. 305, p. 192.
‡ Ibid., No. 307, p. 193. § Ibid., No. 286, p. 178.
‖ Ibid., No. 321, p. 202, and No. 322, p. 203.

upon the fact that Her Majesty's Government had refused to lay before Parliament the correspondence respecting the Berlin Memorandum, on the ground that it had not yet been communicated to the Porte, whereas it was clear that the purport of that document was well known at Constantinople. Had this knowledge come from England? In reply to this question the Foreign Secretary was obliged to confess, and to defend, his unreserved communications with the Turkish Government. He alleged, indeed, that it had been informed through other channels; but he spoke of the proposals of the Powers as "designs," of which the Porte had a right to have the earliest information.

It would have been well if the same openness and candour which was practised towards the Turks had been practised towards Parliament and the public at home. They were not told that Russia, Germany, and Austria had freely communicated their views beforehand, and had intimated their intention of meeting at Berlin for the purpose of putting them into some definite shape. The English people were left under the impression, conveyed in every form through the ordinary channels of information, that the Three Northern Powers had acted in secrecy in preparing the Berlin proposals; and no explanation was given that these proposals, when objected to, were treated as merely bases for discussion, and that the suggestions of England were cordially invited. Nothing of all this was known, and the Government

received a very large amount of support in their refusal of co-operation with the rest of Europe, because of the ignorance which they carefully maintained on all these, and on other determining features of the case.

Notwithstanding the attitude of the British Government, the Berlin proposals would have been presented to the Porte by the other Powers of Europe. But at this moment, on the 30th May, a Revolution at Constantinople deposed the Sultan, and substituted one puppet for another on the throne of Turkey. This was pleaded and accepted as at least an excuse for delay, and things were thus again allowed to run their course.

And here, again, it is to be observed that the action of the British Government had already largely determined what that course was likely to be. On the 6th May the French and German Consuls had been murdered in a fanatical riot at Salonica. This event naturally occasioned great alarm among the European residents in Turkey. Sir Henry Elliot, with the support of all the European Ambassadors, asked his Government to send a squadron to Besika Bay, as a measure which would give confidence to those whom it was his duty to protect. After some hesitation, this request received the assent of the Foreign Secretary, and the squadron anchored in Besika Bay on the 28th of May. Under the conditions of alarm which arose out of the Salonica massacres, it is impossible to blame the Government for this measure in itself. But obviously, unless it was strictly limited to the presence of a force

adequate to the protection of life, and unless in all the circumstances attending its presence, as well as in all the language held concerning it, this one object and no other was declared—the sending of the British fleet at such a moment was liable to become a political demonstration in support of the Turks, and in opposition to the policy of the other Powers of Europe. And this is precisely what it did become, and what every means were taken to make it be. The squadron was increased to a fleet long after alarm had ceased as to any danger to the lives of Europeans in the Turkish Capital. Its stay was purposely prolonged, and, in the language of the Ministerial press, was carefully directed to encourage the Turks to see in it the disposition of England to support them in their policy of resistance. Subsequent disclosures render it probable that the Foreign Secretary had personally no such object in view. But it was the animus, and the effect of the steps actually taken, and of the language which was allowed to be held concerning them.

When Prince Bismarck expressed the hope that England would at least do nothing to encourage the resistance of the Turks, he probably knew at least some portion of the truth. But he cannot have known the whole. The mere refusal of England to support the proposal of the rest of Europe, if this refusal had stood alone, was in itself the most powerful encouragement to the Turks. But this refusal did

not stand alone. It was coupled, as we have seen, in the first place, with a refusal also to make any alternative suggestion. But more than this, it was coupled with a full explanation to the Turks, through Sir H. Elliot, that what England objected to, and had all along done her best to oppose, was any farther interference with Turkey on the part of Europe. Nor was even this all that the British Government did to frustrate the endeavours of the other Powers. It had continued, and was continuing through all its agents, to stimulate the Turks to crush the insurgents, and to upbraid them with "apathy" in not having done so sooner.

At the very moment when Prince Bismarck expressed his significant hope, these actions of the British Government had contributed to a terrible but perfectly natural result. Events had just occurred, then unknown to the Cabinets of Europe, which were destined to take the question out of their hands altogether, and to bring to bear upon it these popular sympathies which, when once aroused, are the most powerful of all factors in political affairs. The Bulgarian massacres were perpetrated by the Turks at the very time when the English Cabinet was doing its best to thwart the concert of Europe for a peaceful settlement of the question. But the history of these massacres, and of the relation in which they stand to the language and to the conduct of the British Government before and after them, must form the subject of another chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BULGARIAN MASSACRES OF MAY, 1876: THEIR CAUSES AND EFFECTS.

WE have seen that from the very beginning of the insurrection in Herzegovina, the British Government earnestly exhorted the Turks to suppress it as soon they could, and by all means to avoid or prevent even diplomatic interference on the part of Europe.

We have seen farther that the diplomatic intervention which it deprecated on the part of others, and on behalf of people whom it knew to be oppressed, it was itself actively exerting on behalf of the oppressors.

Even if England had contracted no obligations towards the subject-populations of Turkey by the Crimean war, and by the Treaties of 1856, this policy would have been, under the actual circumstances of the case, a policy of gross injustice. It was not the policy of simply standing aside and being "neutral." It was a policy under which every iron was put in the fire to uphold a Government against which its own favourite agents were daily reporting the most damning evidence. No amount of testimony or of proof as to the hopeless corruption and deceit of the Turkish authorities made any difference in the lan-

guage of the Cabinet, or seems to have suggested any doubt as to the justice of this course. Its agents were everywhere urging on foreign Governments measures which would have placed the unfortunate refugees from Turkey under the alternative of being starved in the country of their asylum, or murdered in the country of their home.

But there was another consideration palpable in the position of affairs which was equally set aside when our Government continued to urge on the Turks the speedy and energetic suppression of the insurrection. It was notorious that the Turkish Government had no army of regular troops adequate to the work as the insurrection spread. The invariable resource of Turkey under such circumstances always had been, and indeed always must be, the levy of irregular forces—which means simply the letting loose of the armed Mussulman on the unarmed Christian population. All history, and some very recent history, made it certain what the result of this must be. Yet in the face of consequences which were not merely a risk and a danger, but necessary and inevitable results, the language of the British Cabinet, and of all its agents, continued to be fierce and reproachful incitements to the Turks to take more and more energetic measures for putting down the insurrection.

Let us now review in some detail what this language was, and what were its natural results.

So early as the 4th April, Sir H. Elliot had reported that the efficient force in the insurgent provinces was at a very low ebb;* and on the 7th he enclosed a report from Mr. Sandison, that a body of Bashi-Bazouks was employed to accompany the regular battalions.† On the 14th, Mr. Consul Monson reported from Ragusa, that the employment of Bashi-Bazouks was under the serious consideration of the Turkish Government, and the usual argument was urged by that Government in justification of such a measure.‡ The Porte "began to perceive," says the Consul, "that with regular troops alone they had no chance of suppressing the insurrection." Now it will be observed that this despatch reached the Foreign Office on the 22nd of April, or about a fortnight before the massacres, and the information it conveys had been very nearly a whole month in the possession of the Secretary of State, when on the 19th of May he again reproached the Porte for its weakness and apathy in dealing with the insurrection.§ Nor amidst all this language of excitement, hounding on the Turks, does there seem to have been any word of warning issued from the Foreign Office against the employment of Irregulars.

Let us now look at the language of our local agents. It was not till the 4th May that Sir H. Elliot heard

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* Ibid., No. 128, p. 73.
† Ibid., No. 130, Inclos. p. 74.
‡ Ibid., No. 148, p. 86.
§ Ibid., No. 278, p. 173.

of the rising in Bulgaria,* and reported it to the Secretary of State in a despatch of the same date. Two days later, on the 7th May, he reported farther on the same subject, and it is important to observe the language in which he did so. The massacres which afterwards filled Europe with horror, had then actually taken place, or were in course of being perpetrated. But our Ambassador at Constantinople knew nothing of them, and little indeed of anything, except what he was told by the Turkish authorities. He had heard from the Austrian Minister that five villages had been burnt by the insurgents: and Sir H. Elliot concludes thus:—"About 5000 troops have been despatched from here: and I believe that no exertion should be spared for assuring the immediate suppression of a movement which, if allowed to extend, will become extremely serious."† If this was the language held by our Ambassador to the Porte, as well as to his own Government, it is impossible to doubt the effect it must have produced upon the mind of the Pashas. They must have received the impression that the one great desire of the English Government was the suppression of the insurrection; and, to say the very least of it, that they would be not severely judged on account of any measures necessary for the purpose. Nor is it a matter of conjecture that this language was the language held by our Ambassador

* Ibid., No. 252, p. 144. † Ibid., No. 254, p. 144.

to the Turkish Government. It was in strict accordance with the tone and language of the English Cabinet, and with the representations which Sir H. Elliot had been desired to make.

Another despatch, dated May 9th,* two days later, shows that Sir H. Elliot was in close communication with the Government of the Sultan, and was deriving from them all his impressions as to the facts. His language was simply an echo of the language of the Turks. The danger he anticipated was that of "outrages committed on peaceful Mussulmans, and especially upon the women and children," by the insurgents. We shall see later that by the most authentic accounts of the insurrection these Turkish stories of the conduct of the insurgents were absolutely false, and that no Moslem women or children appear in the latest returns of those who were killed by the Bulgarians. It is probable that the Porte had already heard of the massacres, and was preparing its own account, and its own defence of them. That account and that defence reappears in the language of the British Ambassador, who expresses his fear that such outrages "might provoke among the Mohammedans a spirit of fanaticism and revenge, which it might be very difficult to restrain, although the Government declared their determination to do all in their power to prevent it."

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Ibid., No. 255, p. 145.

At last, however, on the 12th May Sir H. Elliot had taken some alarm from a despatch of Vice-Consul Dupuis, dated from Adrianople on the 9th. His dragoman in the town of Eski Zogara reported that the Governor-General of that district had ordered all the Mussulmans to be armed, and also the actual employment of men who were notorious brigands and criminals.* In the meantime there had been a Ministerial crisis at the Porte, and our Ambassador could only say that as soon as a new Government was formed, he "would point out the danger of allowing the local authorities to act as those of Eski Zogara had apparently been doing."

This account from Sir H. Elliot reached London on the very day—the 19th of May—on which the Foreign Secretary upbraided the Porte on its "weakness and apathy" in dealing with the insurrection. Not one word was said of warning or of remonstrance against the savage measures which were now beginning to alarm even Sir H. Elliot. Not even when, a few days later, on the 22nd May, the Foreign Secretary heard from Acting-Consul Freeman at Bosna Serai, that "Bashi-Bazouks were terrorising the people,"† was the English Cabinet induced to retract or to modify its language of incitement to the Porte. In the meantime, our local agents were outstripping even the zeal of their chiefs in encouraging the Turks. On the 12th,

* Ibid., No. 272, Inclos. 2, p. 158. † Ibid., No. 281, p. 175.

Vice-Consul Dupuis reported that "the local authorities, as well as the Turkish Begs, were displaying great activity in the enrolment and equipment of Bashi-Bazouks and other volunteers, and that batches of Turkish peasantry are continually arriving from the surrounding villages to be supplied with arms and ammunition."* This information did indeed occasion some uneasiness in the mind of our Vice-Consul, but it is evident from the context, and from another despatch dated May 16,† that his anxiety was chiefly lest the public peace should be disturbed in the town of Adrianople itself. In reply to his inquiries on the subject, the Vice-Consul was assured by the Turkish authorities that these irregular troops would only be employed to guard the railway line. On the following day, May 13th, the same Vice-Consul expresses his sympathy with the Turks in these measures by specifying the names of certain men of note who were "showing patriotism by arming and maintaining, at their own expense, a corps of 200 Bashi-Bazouks, each for operations in the Balkans."‡ Consul Reade, writing from Rustchuk, on the 16th of May, was still more Turkish in his tone, and seems to have been still more unrestrained in his language of incitement. The discipline of the Turkish troops was said to have been admirable, and he thus concludes his despatch to Sir H.

* Ibid., No. 289, Inclos. 1, p. 180.

† Ibid., 343, Inclos. 1, p. 213. ‡ Ibid. 289, Inclos. 3, p. 181.

Elliot:—"From all I see and hear, I am persuaded that there is nothing serious to fear for the moment, nor will there be if the Government acts with promptitude on the occurrence of any disorder. The Porte, however, I think, would do well were it to grant the Pasha more power, so as to enable him to make examples of some of the chiefs of the insurgents; for I am persuaded if this is not done the natives will think the Government is weak, and the disturbances, which are at present comparatively insignificant, are sure to increase; whereas, if a few examples were made of the chiefs, they would serve as salutary, and, I think, successful lessons to the rest."*

When such was the tone and language of the agents of the British Government, at the very time when the Porte knew that the English Cabinet was also defending it to the utmost from the interference of any other Power, it was natural that the Turks should feel more than free to deal with the insurgents by any means, and by every means at their disposal. And when at last, too late, Sir H. Elliot began to remonstrate, it was equally natural that he should be met by explanations which were sure, if not to be accepted, at least to be reported—and nothing more. The representations of Sir H. Elliot seem to have been made, not personally, but through Mr. Sandison, about the 23rd of May,† and the reply of the Turkish

* Ibid., No. 315, Inclos. p. 198-9.
† Ibid., No. 324, Inclos. 3, p. 214.

Ministers was that the matter was now very much out of their hands, and in those of military commanders who were charged with the duty of suppressing the insurrection. On the part of our Foreign Office nothing whatever appears to have been done, except a purely formal approval of the intention of the Ambassador to make these perfunctory and useless representations.* It is not, of course, for a moment to be supposed that either the British Government or any of its officers foresaw or thought of the horrible means which were taken by the Turks to carry into effect the exhortations which had so often been addressed to them. But this blindness was inexcusable. It arose, and could only arise, out of a spirit of unjust antipathy to the insurgents, and of reckless partisanship with a Government known to be at once weak, careless of human life, and traditionally disposed to indiscriminate massacre as the proper mode of dealing with revolt.

It was too late, even if these remonstrances had been far more energetic, and far more consistent than they were. The Bulgarian massacres, or rather the first rumours which referred to them, were reported by Vice-Consul Dupuis from Adrianople on the 16th and 19th of May,† and reached London on the 2nd June. But outrages equally atrocious were attri-

* Ibid., No. 301, p. 191.
Ibid., No. 343, Inclos. 1, 2, pp. 212, 213.

buted to both sides in the contest, and the Vice-Consul had no means of ascertaining how far they were exaggerated. On the same day, the Foreign Office heard of Consul Reade at Rustchuk being alarmed by the arming of Mussulmans and Circassians, a fact which, he said, had been only known there for two days previously; and this Consul, who had been lately so anxious for energetic measures, now feared that the measures thus resorted to by the Turkish Government would cause the rising in Bulgaria to assume greater dimensions.*

On the 8th June, Sir H. Elliot reported that the Bulgarian insurrection had unquestionably been put down, "although, he regretted to say, with cruelty, and, in some places, with brutality."† He was not disposed to accept the account which reached him from sources liable to exaggeration, "but there was evidence that the employment of Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks had led to the atrocities which might have been expected." This despatch reached the Foreign Office on the 16th June. On the 26th, it received through Consul Bland, at Salonica, but from a Turkish source, an account of the pursuit of the insurgents in Bulgaria, which might have indicated something of the work which had been going on. This account described how a Turkish force had killed the greater part of 2000 men without the loss of a single life on the

* Ibid., No. 346, Inclos. p. 316. † Ibid., No. 443, p. 267.

Turkish side, and how, on the following day, this force had resumed its march, "burning without compassion several villages, and carrying off the live-stock."*

It was on the 23rd June that the *Daily News* published a letter from its correspondent at Constantinople, dated the 16th, which first revealed to the public at home the enormity of the crimes which were being perpetrated by a Government which had been, and was then still being, actively supported by the Government of the Queen. That letter spoke of "dark rumours" which had been current for a whole month, concerning horrible atrocities which had been perpetrated in Bulgaria. The writer explained that hitherto he had abstained from reporting them, but that they were now assuming definiteness and consistency, and he proceeded to give the names of certain villages which had been destroyed, and the various estimates then current of the numbers of men, women, and children, who had been slaughtered. In particular many details were given of the destruction of one village, Peroustitza, in which 1500 persons, mostly women and children, were killed, and certain Turkish officers concerned in the massacre, were named.

This information seemed so specific that it arrested at once public attention. On the 26th of June it was made the subject of questions addressed to the

* Ibid., No. 490, Inclos. 2, p. 325.

Government by Mr. Forster in the House of Commons, and by myself in the House of Lords. The replies of the Government were conceived in a tone of careless incredulity. The Foreign Secretary said that, as I had thought the evidence sufficient to justify me in bringing it before the House, he would make farther inquiry. Considering the information which had reached the Government ten days before, on the 16th, from Sir H. Elliot himself, this incredulity had no justification.

About the same date as the letter published by the *Daily News*, Sir H. Elliot had spoken to the Grand Vizier on the reported cruelties in Bulgaria, and had received the candid reply, that the "emergency had been so great as to render it indispensable at once to stamp the movement out by any means that were immediately available."*

It was not till the 28th of June that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs transmitted to Sir H. Elliot the letter from the *Daily News*, which had given rise to the questions asked in Parliament, and requested such information as the Ambassador might have to give upon the subject.† The matter, however, did not seem to the Government to call for any haste. The telegraph was not used.

Again on the 8th and 10th of July, the same journal published fresh accounts of the massacres

* Ibid., No. 513, p. 344. † Ibid., No. 501, p. 334.

which had been perpetrated. The total number massacred was placed at 12,000, as the lowest estimate. But without vouching for figures, the author of this letter declared that "from all sources came a compact body of testimony, showing that crimes had been committed on a scale which Europe had not known for many years." No more important service has ever been rendered to the world by the exertions of an independent press.

Again the Foreign Secretary, on the 13th of July, forwarded these accounts to Sir H. Elliot, and requested his report. In doing so the Secretary of State expressed a hope that the reports would prove to be unfounded. He suggested that the "emergency of the moment, or the nature of the country, might render the employment of irregular troops a matter of necessity." But he added, that unless these were kept under proper control, it was probable that the indignation which would be roused throughout Europe might go far to counterbalance any material successes which the use of such undisciplined levies might secure.*

Continued Parliamentary interpellations at last compelled Lord Derby to send an urgent telegram on the same day to Sir H. Elliot to inquire of the Consuls, and on the 14th a telegraphic message was sent to Vice-Consul Dupuis to proceed himself to

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Ibid., No. 534, p. 361.

Philippopolis, and to Tatar Bazardjik, to ascertain the truth. This seems to have been the result of a Deputation which waited on the Foreign Secretary on that day, and which gave the earliest symptom of strong popular emotion. To this Deputation the Minister had again represented the case as one of equal cruelties on both sides, and of "savage races fighting in a peculiarly savage manner." Until the pressure of public indignation had thus been brought to bear, it does not seem to have occurred either to the Cabinet or to our agents in Turkey, that there was any need for close, personal, and independent inquiry. Their theory was, that these reported massacres were certainly exaggerated; that to some extent they were unavoidable; that they were perpetrated equally on both sides; that they were of course much to be deplored; but that as compared with the great object of putting down the insurrection, and maintaining the authority of the Porte, they were not to be regarded as influencing in any way the policy to be pursued. On this theory there was not only no use in inquiring, but great harm. And so, until "sentiment" began to act on the politicians of Europe, no inquiry was made.

It may be well here to state shortly what was the result of the inquiry, when it was actually made by Mr. Baring, who, at last, was deputed for the purpose from the Embassy at Constantinople, on the 19th of July.

The insurrection in Bulgaria, such as it was, began about the 1st of May. It was from the first, a feeble, and almost a childish attempt. A few small Turkish villages were burnt, and a few zaptiehs, or Turkish policemen, who resisted the insurgents, were killed. Azis Pasha, the officer who was in command at Philippopolis, and who went to the disturbed district when the alarm reached him, reported that four regiments of regular troops would be sufficient to suppress the insurrection at once. But as no such troops were forthcoming, a general panic seems to have seized all the officers and Moslem notables in the country, and the Vali of Adrianople called on the Mussulmans to arm. He also sent Reschid Pasha to command the volunteers thus raised. The Government distributed arms among the volunteers, and 2000 irregulars were brought from another quarter. This action of an officer so important as the Vali of Adrianople, who, from that city, was in easy and direct communication with the Porte, makes it certain that the Turkish Government was directly responsible for the measures so taken.

When Azis Pasha returned to Philippopolis from Bazardjik, the officer in command at that village sent orders to "Achmet Agha of Dospat," to march against the town of Batak, where some Mussulmans were said to have been killed, and the people reported to be rising.

It is not expressly stated in Mr. Baring's report

that this order emanated from Azis Pasha himself: but the circumstances leave little doubt that it did, and that it was the measure resolved upon with his subordinate at Bazanjik, when he found he could not safely advance beyond that place. When Achmet Agha received the order, he associated with himself another Turkish officer, called "Mohammed Agha of Dorkovo."

This order was executed on the 9th of May, under circumstances which are thus described by Mr. Baring :—

"*Batak.*—I have now to give an account of the most fearful tragedy that happened during the whole insurrection, and about which, till a very short time ago, little or nothing had been said.

"The Medjliss of Tatar Bazardjik hearing that preparations for revolt were going on in this village, ordered Achmet Agha, of Dospat, to attack it, and this individual, having joined his forces with those of Mohammed Agha, of Dorkovo, proceeded to carry out these orders. On arriving at the village he summoned the inhabitants to give up their arms, which, as they mistrusted him, they refused to do, and a desultory fight succeeded, which lasted two days, hardly any loss being inflicted on either side. On the 9th of May the inhabitants, seeing that things were going badly with them, and that no aid came from without, had a parley with Achmet, who solemnly swore that if they only give up their arms, not a hair of their heads should be touched. A certain number of the inhabitants, luckily for them, took advantage

of this parley to make their escapes. The villagers believed Achmet's oath, and surrendered their arms, but this demand was followed by one for all the money in the village, which of course had also to be acceded to.

"No sooner was the money given up than the Bashi-Bazouks set upon the people and slaughtered them like sheep. A large number of people, probably about 1000 or 1200, took refuge in the church and churchyard, the latter being surrounded by a wall. The church itself is a solid building, and resisted all the attempts of the Bashi-Bazouks to burn it from the outside; they consequently fired in through the windows, and, getting upon the roof, tore off the tiles and threw burning pieces of wood and rags dipped in petroleum among the mass of unhappy human beings inside. At last the door was forced in, the massacre completed, and the inside of the church burnt. Hardly any escaped out of these fatal walls. The only survivor I could find was one old woman who alone remained out of a family of seven. When the door was broken in and she was expecting immediate death, a Turk took her by the hand, and saying, 'Come, old woman, I am not going to hurt you,' led her away and saved her life.

"The spectacle which the church and churchyard presents must be seen to be described; hardly a corpse has been buried; where a man fell there he now lies, and it is with difficulty that one picks one's way to the door of the church, the entrance of which is barred by a ghastly corpse stretched across the threshold.

"I visited this valley of the shadow of death on the 31st of July, more than two months and a half after the massacre, but still the stench was so overpowering that one could hardly force one's way into the churchyard. In the streets at every step lay human remains, rotting and sweltering in the summer sun—here a skull of an old woman, with the grey hair still attached to it—there the false tress of some unhappy girl, slashed in half by a yataghan, the head which it had adorned having been probably carried off to be devoured by some of the dogs, who up to this have been the only scavengers.

"Just outside the village I counted more than sixty skulls in a little hollow, and it was evident from their appearance that nearly all of them had been severed from the bodies by axes and yataghans. From the remains of female wearing apparel scattered about, it is plain that many of the persons here massacred were women.

"It is to be feared also that some of the richer villagers were subjected to cruel tortures before being put to death, in hopes that they would reveal the existence of hidden treasure. Thus Petro Triandaphyllos and Pope Necio were roasted, and Stoyan Stoychoff had his ears, nose, hands, and feet cut off.

"Enough, I think, has been said to show that to Achmet Agha and his men belongs the distinction of having committed perhaps the most heinous crime that has stained the history of the present century, Nana Sahib alone, I should say, having rivalled their deeds.

"As regards the number of killed, I have before stated that about 5000 is my estimate. I am aware

that others place it higher; but be this as it may, whether the slain are to be counted by hundreds or by thousands does not lessen in the least degree the criminality of the slayers. The intention was to exterminate all except those few girls (probably about eighty) whom they carried off to satisfy their lusts. Those that escaped owed their safety to their own good fortune, and not to the tender mercies of their neighbours.

"For this exploit Achmet Agha has received the Order of the Medjidié.

"I am, however, willing to a certain extent to believe that the Turkish authorities were not aware, before I visited Batak, of the horrors that had been committed there. The place lies in the mountains, eight hours' from Bazardjik, is somewhat difficult of access, and till I went there no one had gone who was likely to give the authorities a faithful account of what he saw. Had they really known that the place was a mass of putrefying corpses, would they not have taken some measures to clear them away before I reached the scene?

"A Turk who accompanied me from Bazardjik, and who on the way had been loud in his denunciation of the rebels, changed his tone completely when he really saw what his countrymen had done, and was not less horror-stricken than I was."

Such is the story of Batak; vague rumours of which, connected with wrong names and a thousand incorrect details, had filled the air of European Turkey for two months before any inquiry was made. But Batak did not stand alone. Over a large pro-

vince, and among somewhere about fifty villages, similar scenes on a smaller scale were enacted. In the neighbouring province of Slimnia the orgies of massacre went on so late as the 30th of May, long after every appearance of resistance had ceased; and this renewal of the bloody work was due to the direct and personal agency of a high officer of the Porte, whose name has justly acquired an infamous celebrity. This man was Shefket Pasha. Against the opinion of a new Vali of Adrianople, who seems to have been a moderate and humane man, this emissary of the Porte again raised and let loose the Bashi-Bazouks, and himself marched on the slightest pretences of disaffection to the village of Bozadikue. The details are given by Mr. Baring:—"On his approach the Elders came out to meet and salute him, and assure him of their loyalty. He entirely refused to listen to them, and drove them away with insulting language, and ordered the attack. Out of 130 houses all but 29 were burnt, 143 men and women were massacred, &c.; 7000 sheep were carried off, as well as quantities of other property, &c. What makes this act of Shefket Pasha," says Mr. Baring, "so abominable, is that there was not a semblance of revolt; the inhabitants were perfectly peaceable, and the attack on them was as cruel and wanton a deed as could well have been committed. Moreover, Shefket Pasha was not a mere chief of Bashi-Bazouks, but a 'Ferik,' who had fought in the Herzegovina,

and who ought not to have been inspired by a love of bloodshed or plunder like an Achmet Agha, or a Mohammed Agha."

Mr. Baring's estimate of the total numbers of persons massacred during the month of May, in Bulgaria, was about 12,000 persons belonging to the Christian population : whilst he places the number of Mussulmans at 163, of whom only 12 were women and children. Not one man of the regular troops at last employed was killed; and it does not appear that of the small number of Mussulmans killed there were any who fell in any serious contest of arms.

Mr. Baring gave his figures as an estimate founded on personal observation of the number of survivors in the villages, of the number of houses burnt, and of the quantity of human remains which he actually saw. He gave the result as open to correction, and animadverted on the exaggerations common at the time, which assigned such numbers as 25,000 or 30,000 to be massacred. "On the other hand," he adds, "anybody who has had the misfortune to visit Batak cannot read without indignation the report of the Turkish Commissioners, published in the *Turquie* of August 21, and which puts at 1836 the number of Bulgarians killed in 'fighting the Imperial troops and volunteers.'"

It is right to add, that notwithstanding the detailed and careful examination of data, and the personal inspection on which the report of Mr. Baring was

founded, his estimate of numbers was subsequently disputed to the extent of reducing the number of Bulgarians actually killed to about 3694; of whom, however, it is admitted that about 1907 were helpless women and children. This reduced estimate is the result of a Report by Mr. Stoney, principal Agent of the Central Relief Committee for the Bulgarians—a Report which was forwarded by Mr. Layard to the Foreign Office about a year after the date of the massacres—that is, on the 2nd of May, 1877. This Report is very remarkable in one respect—namely, that it gives his estimate, founded on the most careful personal enquiry at a time when excitement had subsided, not only of the Bulgarians who had been massacred, but also of the Turks who had been killed in the revolt by the Bulgarian insurgents. From the table which he gives it appears that whilst fifty-four Bulgarian villages were more or less burnt and destroyed, only six Turkish villages had been injured. It appears farther that whilst 1177 Bulgarian women and children were murdered in Batak alone, and 730 in other villages, not one single Turkish woman or child could be returned as killed by the Bulgarian insurgents. This disposes of the false accusations spread abroad by the Turks, of the murderous and exterminating disposition shown by these who had risen in rebellion against them—accusations which were repeated by Sir H. Elliot, and on which are still founded such excuses as can be made for the massacres of May, 1876. Even of Turkish

men—who are always armed—only forty-six are returned as having been killed, in Mr. Stoney's Report.*

No real importance attaches to the precise number of thousands who perished in these famous massacres. On this point Mr. Baring, at a later period, made the following just and effective reply:—"For my part I have always considered the number of persons massacred had very little to do with the actual character of the atrocities, and whether 5000 persons perished or 15,000, the sanguinary ferocity of those who suppressed the outbreak is not diminished. The Bashi-Bazouks killed everybody they could lay hands upon, and those who escaped owe their lives to their own good luck, and not to any particular feelings of clemency on the part of the Mussulmans."†

Mr. Baring's Report was not written till the 1st of September. It was transmitted by Sir H. Elliot on the 5th, with a covering despatch, in which he admitted that "it established only too clearly that the cruelties had been carried on on a scale fully sufficient to justify the indignation that they have called forth." He adds, that "the accounts that were circulated of the brutal manner in which the insurrection had been suppressed had been generally borne out." Mr. Baring's Report was not, however, published by the Government till the 19th of Sep-

* Turkey, XXV., 1877, Inclos. 2, p. 204–5.
† Turkey, XV., 1877, p. 119–20.

tember, when it appeared as a supplement to the *London Gazette.*

The direct complicity of the Turkish Government in the Bulgarian massacres, besides being a matter of unavoidable influence from the action of officers who were in communication with it, was demonstrated by its conduct towards them when the massacre had been perpetrated. Mr. Baring's Report sums up this part of the evidence in a few words :—"The Porte has given a powerful handle to its enemies and detractors by the way it has treated those who took an active part in the suppression of the insurrection. Those who have committed atrocities have been rewarded, whilst those who have endeavoured to protect the Christians from the fury of the Bashi-Bazouks, &c., have been passed over with contempt"—*e.g.* :

"Shefket Pasha holds a high office in the Palace ; Hafiz Pasha has a command in Servia ; Achmet Agha has been decorated ; so have Tossoun Bey, and Nedjjb Effendi. On the other hand, has any reward been given to Hafiz Effendi, who saved Yamboli ?—to the Mutevelli of Karlovo ?—to Husni Effendi, commander of the troops at Yamboli, who saved those places ?—to Rustem Effendi, Yuzbashi at Tournova, who having fought against insurgents really in arms, saved ten prisoners from the fury of the mob ?—or to Haydar Effendi, Mutessarif of Slimnia ?"*

* Supplement to *London Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1876.

The effect produced in England by the confirmation of the Bulgarian massacres is one of the events of history. In the opinion of many that effect was unreasonable and excessive; and there is a sense in which this is true. These massacres were nothing but what was to be expected from the Turks under the circumstances in which they were placed. It had always been the method by which they suppressed and punished every revolt. The official classes connected with every Government in Europe ought to have known, and did know, the probability of such colossal crimes being committed. They were themselves familiar, and they forgot that the public were not equally familiar with the yearly reports from Ambassadors and Consuls, which showed that the Turkish Government continued to be just what it had ever been, only weaker, and therefore all the more certain to resort, under alarm, to the handiest and the most destructive weapons. To these official classes, therefore, it was a matter of astonishment and dismay that the account of the Bulgarian massacres should arouse in the popular mind such a storm of passionate indignation. They were accustomed to regard the standing vices and the habitual outrages of Turkish administration with a languid indifference, or as at most the fit subject of perfunctory rebuke. The miseries of the subject populations of Turkey were to be deplored, but, on the other hand, they were to be endured as the price of maintaining

Turkey. The public ought to have known what that price was. Occasional massacres were amongst the small change of a great transaction. This was the official view, and it had a horrible consistency. But the public did not know the real nature of the system for which the Government and the Crown of England were being made responsible. They had not the evidence before them of which the Cabinet had long been in possession. The massacres awoke them to the truth with a passionate surprise; and in one hour convictions were reached, by the help of pity and of anger, which, it is true, ought to have been arrived at sooner, and on less painful evidence. In this sense, and in this sense only, it may be said with truth, that the passion of the people was excessive. It ought, in great part at least, to have been aroused before; and it would have been aroused if the people had known the truth.

But whether excessive or not the public feeling excited by the Bulgarian massacres was the most powerful of all factors to be dealt with in the Eastern Question. As such, at least, if as nothing more, it was recognised beforehand by the English Government. They regarded indeed the feeling as a misfortune, but as a power which must be acknowledged and respected. The policy of supporting, even diplomatically, the Turkish Government at any cost to the subject-populations, was a policy no longer possible. To defend Turkey by force of

arms, as we had defended her in the Crimean War, was a policy which, even before the massacres, could not have been pursued with much hope of public approbation. Accordingly the Foreign Secretary, when on the 25th May he telegraphed to Sir H. Elliot that the Turks must not count on more than our "moral support," gave as a reason for this limitation of their hopes that both the circumstances and the state of feeling in this country were very much changed since the Crimean War.* Although neither the public nor the Government knew anything of the massacres when this message was sent, they both knew that the Eastern Question was now raised, not as in 1854 by external aggression upon Turkey, but by the natural consequences of her gross misgovernment, acting on her Christian subjects, and on the sympathy of surrounding populations. So long as the Cabinet could work secretly with the weapons of diplomacy, it could and it did support the Turks as eagerly as if they possessed a Government worthy of support. But when the culminating proof came of the unchanged and unmitigated barbarism of Turkey, even this immoral support became impossible. The Government of the Queen of England treated this change as a great misfortune. But, at least, they saw it to be a fact. It is worth while to note the language in which this conclusion was expressed.

* Turkey, III., 1876.

In the first place, it is to be observed that the Government continued to deny or discredit the accounts of the massacres which had appeared in the press. Although as early as the 16th June the Cabinet had heard from Sir H. Elliot himself that the Bulgarian rising "had been suppressed, he regretted to say, with cruelty, and in some cases with brutality,"—although on the 24th of July it had heard from Lord Odo Russell that the information of the German Government confirmed the reports respecting the atrocities committed by the Turks in Bulgaria,*—although on the 4th of August the Cabinet had received Mr. Baring's estimate of the number killed as amounting to 12,000,† yet down to so late a date as the 11th of August, 1876, every official who spoke in either House of Parliament continued to doubt, and to deny as far as it was possible to do so, the reported massacres and brutalities of the Turks. On that day, however, in spite of a fresh denial from the Prime Minister, Mr. Bourke said "he felt bound to admit that the Government really had no idea of the events which had been going on in Bulgaria." On the 9th August, the Foreign Secretary had instructed Sir H. Elliot to urge on the Porte the very mild admonition "that any repetition of the outrages committed in Bulgaria

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* Turkey, V., 1876. No. 14, p. 6.
† Ibid., No. 27, Inclos. p. 25.

should be avoided." The reason given was that the indignation of Europe had become uncontrollable and interference in a sense hostile to Turkey would inevitably follow."*

It was not however till the 29th of August that the Foreign Secretary seems to have apprehended the real aspect of the public mind. When he did apprehend it he communicated his impression to Sir H. Elliot by telegraph in the following philosophical announcement: "I think it right to mention for your guidance that the impression produced here by events in Bulgaria has completely destroyed sympathy with Turkey. The feeling is so universal and so strong that even if Russia were to declare war against the Porte, Her Majesty's Government would find it practically impossible to interfere."† It will be observed that this was the conclusion come to by the Secretary of State a week before the publication of the celebrated pamphlet by Mr. Gladstone, which did not appear till the 6th September. And it is remarkable that on the 5th of September, which was the very day on which that pamphlet was dated, and before the Government can have known of its existence, the telegraphic message of the 29th of August

* Ibid., No. 38, p. 47.

† Turkey, VI. 1877. The Government attached so much importance to this Despatch that it was presented to Parliament as a separate Paper.

was more fully expressed and explained in a despatch as follows :—"It is my duty to inform you that any sympathy which was previously felt here towards Turkey has been completely destroyed by the recent lamentable occurrences in Bulgaria. The accounts of outrages and excesses committed by the Turkish troops upon an unhappy and for the most part unresisting population, has roused an universal feeling of indignation in all classes of English society, and to such a pitch has this risen that in the extreme case of Russia declaring war against Turkey, Her Majesty's Government would find it practically impossible to interfere in defence of the Ottoman Empire. Such an event, by which the sympathies of the nation would be brought into direct opposition to its Treaty engagements, would place England in a most unsatisfactory and even humiliating position, yet it is impossible to say that if the present conflict continues the contingency may not arise."*

It will be observed that in this sentence an opinion is implied that the Treaty obligations of 1856 would require England to support Turkey against Russia in the event of an attack, without any reference to the question whether the conduct of Turkey did or did not justify Russia in resenting an infraction of those very treaties by Turkey herself. It is needless to say, after the analysis of the Treaties given in a former

* Turkey, I. 1877. No. 159, p. 105.

chapter, that England was under no such unconditional obligation, and that the opinion thus implied by the Foreign Secretary represents an erroneous view of our position in reference both to the Treaties and to the policy of 1856.

It will be observed farther that in this despatch the Foreign Secretary does not express or indicate the slightest sympathy on the part of the Cabinet with the popular indignation which had been aroused. It treats that indignation simply as a fact which was to be taken into account—a fact which would render it "practically impossible" for the Government to pursue the policy which might otherwise be desirable —namely, the policy of supporting Turkey by force of arms.

It is needless to say that this warning to the Turks cut two ways. If it made them less confident of the support of England in the extreme event of war, it made them on the other hand less heedful of English advice in time of peace, and they were sharp enough to see that the "moral support" of the British Government, which was evidently committed on their side, would continue to be afforded to them whatever might be their conduct. This had come to be the position of affairs long before there was any popular agitation in England, and when the state of public feeling had as yet been indicated only in Parliament and in the press. Sir H. Elliot reported

on it so early as the 3rd September,* and informed the Foreign Secretary that the effect produced upon the Turks had been obvious for weeks. "The influence of Her Majesty's Government over them (the Turks) has within the last few weeks been impaired by the tone of the debates in Parliament and of the public press. As long as they could hope that after following our advice they had more chance of material support from us if the necessity for it should arise, our words had more weight with them than can be expected when they believe that we should rather abandon them to be dealt with by their enemies than interfere actually on their behalf."

It will be seen that this account of the position of England, given by her own Ambassador, represents a position of absolute helplessness and isolation. It was a position of mere "drift." Any effectual support of Turkey was admitted to be impossible. Any prevailing influence with the conduct of the Porte was equally impossible. Co-operation with the rest of Europe had been deliberately abandoned. The policy of the other Powers was repudiated and countermined. But no other policy was substituted in its stead. Futile exhortations to maintain peace, without a single resolute endeavour to secure any one of the conditions which render peace either

possible or desirable, were the only resource of the British Government.

It is to be observed, however, that although the just and inevitable effect of the Bulgarian massacres upon public feeling in England increased and confirmed the helplessness of the English Cabinet in the crisis which had arisen, no such result would have been produced if that Cabinet had not really at heart a policy which it was difficult to avow, and which it was equally difficult to enforce. That policy was the support and maintenance of Turkey at any cost to the subject-populations. Even before the Bulgarian massacres were known, quite enough was known or suspected of the character of the Turkish Government to make this policy a dangerous one in the face of public opinion in England, and an impossible policy in the face of Europe. We have seen the effect of this position in the disingenuousness with which the principle of an European concert in the affairs of Turkey was accepted and applauded when the British Government spoke to the Great Powers, and was depreciated and denounced when it spoke to Turkey.

The accession of a new Sovereign to the throne of Turkey on the 30th of May, 1876, was eagerly seized upon by the Cabinet of London as a happy reprieve from the position which required some decision or other to be taken; and the whole month of June was occupied by the other Powers in vain attempts to as-

certain what the Government of England really meant, and in endeavours equally vain to persuade it to come to some definite resolve. It is humiliating to find that every Government in Europe, except that of England, had some definite idea as to the course which justice and policy alike demanded, and was willing to co-operate in enforcing it. The only thing which the English Government would do and did, was to scold. Thus on the 1st of June, the Italian Ambassador declared the opinion of his Government that no effectual settlement of the troubles in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be arrived at that did not include the grant of autonomy in some shape to those provinces, and he begged to be informed of the views of Her Majesty's Government on the position of affairs. To this the English Foreign Secretary could only reply that time should be given to the new Sultan, observing at the same time that "the mis-government of the late Sultan had been notorious and extreme, and his successor, whatever he might turn out to be, could hardly do worse, and would probably do better."* Not one of the Powers of Europe believed in the reality of any prospect of reform from a change of Sultans, and this language of the English Foreign Secretary certainly did not indicate any sanguine view. On the other hand, there never could have been a more favourable moment for coming to some agreement

* Turkey, III., 1876. No. 332, p. 207.

with the other Powers as to what must be done in the very probable, if not certain, event of such hopes turning out illusion. They were all willing to be guided to a very great extent by the opinion of England. They only desired to know what that opinion was. They were perfectly open as to their own views, but eagerly explained that these were subject to modification, and to advice from the Cabinet of St. James's. They could get no satisfaction, and hardly even a reply which was not a mere evasion, such as advice to let the Turks alone. At last on the 12th of June the Russian Ambassador in London asked the Foreign Secretary "what was the drift and object of British policy? Until that was known to his Government united action was impossible, however much other Powers might desire it." To this the English Minister replied that "nothing, he thought, remained, except to allow the renewal of the struggle, until success should have declared itself more or less decisively on one side or the other. If the Sultan found that his troops could make no head against the insurgents, and that the latter continued to hold their ground, he might and probably would be willing to yield to the pressure of necessity. In that case the revolted provinces would have acquired for themselves a position similar to that of Servia and Roumania. If again the Sultan succeeded in even partially re-establishing his authority, the demands of the insurgents would be moderated, their confidence would have received a check, and they would acquiesce in

some such arrangement as that made with the Cretans after the war of 1866-7."*

There was only one positive declaration in the reply to Count Schouvalow, and that was a declaration that England was not prepared to use compulsion towards either side.

There were two fatal objections to this policy of indifference and abstention. In the first place, it assumed that no duty and obligation of interference, on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte, lay upon the European Powers. The Foreign Secretary must have known that no such doctrine was admitted by them, and that the opposite doctrine had been asserted and adopted. In the second place, it was certain that even if all the Cabinets of Europe assented to a policy of passive indifference, it would not be assented to by the populations around Turkey, which sympathised with the insurgents. The answer, therefore, of the English Cabinet was in reality no answer at all, and presented no basis whatever for any solution of the difficulties of the case. It was an answer which simply contemplated handing over the east of Europe to a bloody and revolutionary war.

France appears to have been equally anxious to know the real policy of England, and equally desirous of co-operating in any reasonable proposals to be enjoined upon the Porte. But her Majesty's Govern-

* Ibid., No. 427, p. 261.

ment had no proposals whatever to make—except, once more, that there should be no interference with the Turks. On the same day on which the Foreign Secretary recorded his conversation with Count Schouvalow, he directed Lord Lyons to represent to the French Government that the insurrections in Turkey were really fomented by the "projects of pacification continually put forward with the object of making the insurgents look to Foreign Powers, and not to their own Government for protection and guarantees."*

This language, which in the teeth of every evidence and in the teeth of frequent admissions to the contrary, represented the Turkish Government as trustworthy and honest in its conduct towards the insurgents, was faithfully repeated by Lord Lyons to the Duc Decazes, on the 16th of June. The French Minister does not seem to have thought it worth while to reply seriously to language of this kind, and he accordingly contented himself with "once again begging the English Ambassador to impress upon her Majesty's Government his anxious desire that some means might be devised of making a declaration of the union of Great Britain with the other Powers."†

On the 21st of June the Russian Ambassador communicated to the Foreign Secretary the reply

* Ibid., No. 428, p. 261. † Ibid., No. 460, p. 278.

of Prince Gortchakow to the language of the English Minister. It was entirely frank and eminently moderate in tone. It represented that in the opinion of the Russian Government, a policy of absolute non-interference in the contest between the Turkish Government and its subjects, considering the character of inveteracy which it must necessarily assume, was a policy practically impossible. It was a policy moreover incompatible with the honour and conscience of the Christian Powers. Europe was called upon, and would be compelled to exercise its influence and its power in moderating conflicting passions, or in guiding the energies of the various populations in the path of peaceful and orderly progress. The Russian Government inclined to the plan of vassal and tributary autonomous States. It must dissent from the opinion expressed by the English Foreign Secretary that it would be useless to interfere till the contest had been fought out. It had always held on the contrary that the Powers should interfere to avert a fanatical war of extermination, both on general grounds of humanity, and for their own interests. It would consent, however, to the adjournment of all collective action for an indeterminate period. Without having any confidence in the new Turkish Government, Russia did not desire to press unduly upon it. But the European Powers "would do well to make use of the interval to agree on the combinations which they

shall propose." The Emperor of Russia hoped that the Queen's Government would not persist in making the progress of farther discussion dependent on events, but would at once impart their views on the considerations now submitted to them.*

On the following day, the 22nd of June, similar representations were urged on the English Foreign Secretary, by the Ambassador of Austro-Hungary. This Power, also, the most conservative of all the European States as regarded the territorial integrity of the Turkish Empire in Europe, saw and keenly felt the folly of allowing things to take their course. Such a course would compel Russia to move in an opposite direction. Servia and Montenegro could not be kept quiet. Together, these two States, and even Servia alone, could command a force superior to that which was then reported to be at the command of Turkey. The Porte, it was said, had not more than 40,000 men to put into the field; whilst Servia alone could dispose of 96,000. The insurgents would, therefore, not be discouraged, but incited by a purely passive attitude on the part of Europe. Austro-Hungary, in these circumstances, found it "not only desirable, but necessary, to know definitely the intentions of the British Government." If it was the intention of England to leave matters alone, the Austrian Government would then take its

* Ibid., No. 476, pp. 312, 313.

own course. But it would be better satisfied if England would endeavour, in concert with Austria, to bring about a pacification. In either case "it would appear that the British Government should make its choice, and it was its own interest, no less than that of the Austrian Government, that a positive decision should be arrived at, in one way or another, with the view to avoid a wavering policy, prejudicial to commerce and industry, and inconvenient to the surrounding countries."*

These appeals were all in vain. The English Foreign Secretary would neither definitively declare a policy of isolation and abstention (for this he disclaimed), nor would he indicate any opinion as to a desirable basis of interference. He would simply watch and wait. "Her Majesty's Government are ready to take part in the work of pacification when they see a chance of doing so with effect. If they now abstain, it is only because they see nothing to be done."†

On the 23rd June, France once more returned to the charge, and her Foreign Minister again urged on Lord Lyons the importance of establishing a complete accord between the Six Great Powers, on the Eastern Question, and of making that accord apparent. France was willing to agree to anything which

* Ibid., No. 481, pp. 316, 317.
† Ibid., No. 481, pp. 317, 318.

could have this desirable result. For example, a collective warning to Servia against joining in the fray might be a suggestion worthy of consideration. But the particular step to be taken was a secondary consideration compared with the importance of letting it be understood and known, that Europe had not abandoned the principle of dealing with the Eastern Question by collective action.

Instead of responding to this appeal, the English Foreign Secretary now eagerly took advantage of those different tendencies of interest and opinion which necessarily existed between Russia and Austro-Hungary on the question of autonomy to the Christian provinces of Turkey. On the 28th June he addressed to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg an elaborate despatch, in which every suggestion made by Russia was canvassed in detail. He had informed Count Schouvalow of the objections of Austria to the concession of autonomy. On the other hand, he added that so far as the interests of European policy were concerned, he should see no objection to a large measure of real freedom. But then Turkey was to be consulted. This was a perfectly safe stopper to every proposal. "I was not prepared to put forward a plan for the government of the provinces without at least knowing what the opinion of the Porte would be in regard to it."*

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* Ibid, No. 502, p. 338.

On the following day a formal despatch, addressed to Count Schouvalow, summed up all the difficulties and objections which could be entertained against doing anything at all, and declared it to be the opinion of the British Government that the complete suppression of the insurrection by the Turks, and the "restoration of order" in the re-establishment of their authority, was an indispensable preliminary to the advantageous treatment of any schemes for the better administration of the country. The tone of this despatch was more undisguisedly Turkish than any preceding one addressed to the same quarter. The insurrectionary movement was denounced as one "not exclusively or principally a struggle directed against local oppression, whether in civil or religious matters." Servia ought to be warned that if she went to war, she must not expect to be protected from the consequences of failure and defeat. If this warning were given in a tone which did not admit of misconstruction, and if the Turkish provinces were freed from foreign agitators, "the work of pacification would be so greatly advanced as to render the completion of it an easy task."*

It is not worth while to stop even for a moment to discuss the common sense of that view of the Eastern Question which placed the fundamental difficulty to be dealt with, not in the misgovern-

* Ibid., No. 506, p. 341.

ment of the Turks, but in the foreign sympathy which that misgovernment always enabled the insurgents, most naturally and most justly, to count upon and secure. This kind of political philosophy had been carefully instilled into the Foreign Secretary by Mr. Consul Holmes, and by Sir Henry Elliot. Nor is it worth while to argue on the reasonableness of the speculation, that if the Turkish Government succeeded in suppressing the insurrection by force of arms, they would then inaugurate a new reign of justice and of mercy. These were, of course, not the follies of men who really believed in them, but the excuses of politicians who shrank from responsibilities devolving upon England as a Great Power. It may, however, be well to observe on the unpractical and impracticable character of the suggestion that Servia should be warned, that in the event of defeat she would be left to endure the consequences. This meant, if it meant anything, that if the chances of war should enable Turkey to defeat and overwhelm one of the smallest and feeblest States in Europe, the Great Powers would allow the tide of Moslem conquest once more to resume its march, and to reconquer provinces which, by the action of the Great Powers, had been redeemed from its direct dominion. A Cabinet which believed this to be among the possibilities of practical politics, must have been blind indeed to the most obvious conditions of the problem to be solved: and we shall

presently see how the British Government itself was compelled to act when the supposed contingency actually arose.

The intervention of Europe, which afforded the only chance of reform and peace, having been thus perseveringly thwarted by the British Government, the natural results followed. War was added to insurrection. On the 1st and 2nd July, Servia and Montenegro, evidently in concert, entered upon hostilities against Turkey. The result was a contest in which the Montenegrins, indeed, gained great advantages, but in which Servia speedily found herself overmatched. Unlike the Montenegrins, whom centuries of continual contest had inured to war, fighting in a less favourable country for raw troops, and pitted against the bulk as well as the flower of the Turkish regular army, the Servians were finally defeated, and the threatened advance of the Turks upon the Principality at last placed the European Powers in a position in which even the English Cabinet was compelled to acknowledge that something must be done.

It was during this contest, prolonged through the months of July and August, 1876, that the fact of the Bulgarian massacres became known in England, and throughout the rest of Europe.

It will be seen that long before this event occurred, the Queen's Government had acknowledged the practical impossibility of doing more than giving a "moral support" to the most immoral Government in Europe.

It will be seen farther that the necessary consequence of this acknowledgment was, complete helplessness in the actual position of affairs. The moral support accorded to Turkey encouraged her to resist even the most moderate and conservative proposals of reform; whilst the declaration that nothing more in the way of support could be afforded, tended to make her indifferent even to the advice and exhortation of England.

When the passionate indignation awakened by the Bulgarian massacres broke over the English people, there was yet time to escape from this position. The conviction that we had in Turkey to deal with a system essentially barbarous, had become a living force in politics. If advantage had been taken of it, it might have been turned to good account. It depended entirely on the Government of the Queen whether this force was to give them a new power and a new authority, or whether it was to smite them with a fresh attack of impotence. New convictions as to the real position of affairs would have given irresistible support to new resolves as to the only possible mode of dealing with it. The absolute necessity of joining the rest of Europe in imposing measures of reform on Turkey, and of following the successful precedent of the intervention in Syria in 1860, would have been obvious to all. Nothing could have resisted the Government if it had taken in this direction a new departure. On the other

hand, if anything like effective support to Turkey had been impossible before, it had become still more impossible now. Even the language of deprecation and apology on behalf of the Porte could no longer be endured. To stand at all, the Government would be compelled to join in the universal chorus of denunciation. The necessary result must be to make the Porte more than ever inaccessible to mere advice or to remonstrance; and unless the right and duty of Europe to intervene were now declared and enforced, all influence over the course of events must inevitably be lost, and England especially must be reduced to a position of helplessness even more manifest, and therefore more humiliating, than before.

Nor was this all. What was lost to England must obviously be gained by Russia. Those who in the midst of hesitation and distracted counsels, have a clear and definite opinion, are necessarily in possession of a great advantage. This advantage becomes insuperable when the policy they advocate is in accordance with the natural tendency of events, when it is best promoted by allowing things to take their course, and when the most conclusive argument in its favour consists in the simple acknowledgment and reiteration of notorious facts. In this lay the unanswerable force of all the Russian despatches of the time. There can be no greater contrast than between the calm and pitiless expression of undeniable propositions, with the inevitable conclusions, which

are the characteristics of these despatches, and the dilatory pleas, and incoherent arguments of the corresponding papers of the English Cabinet. Nor did Russia for a moment conceal her own resolution to act, if other Powers would not act, on the policy of intervention. So long as it could be hoped or expected that such intervention would be exercised in concert with the other Powers of Europe, she exercised her influence to restrain the smaller States which had no right to precipitate a decision. But Prince Gortchakow early warned the British Government that if nothing were done in the direction of the Berlin proposals, he would do nothing to restrain Servia or Montenegro from the action which they ultimately took.

Everything, therefore, depended on the course taken by the Cabinet of St. James's, when the feeling aroused by the Bulgarian massacres broke out in England. The effect of that feeling was quite as powerful in Russia. It rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for the Government to restrain the excitement of its people.

And here it is well worthy of observation, that the direction taken by public feeling in England was not one which at all hampered or impeded the Government in adopting a more vigorous policy. The conclusion instinctively adopted by the country, and expressed in Parliament, was a conclusion purely negative. The Turks, after this display of their

character and conduct, must not be supported; this was all. But it remained for the Cabinet to give a positive direction to this purely negative conclusion. They were free to take a new line, and this too without any confession of error in their previous conduct. Nothing is more remarkable in the debates of Parliament than the reticence and leniency with which the previous conduct of the Government was treated. Censure and denunciation were indeed poured upon the Turks, but very little blame was cast upon the Government which had been giving to those Turks a most unjust support. Its conduct in this respect was hardly noticed. Even after the official papers had been presented to Parliament, in the debate upon them which took place on the 31st of July, 1876, there was almost a culpable neglect of this feature of the case. Fault was indeed found with the Government, but in the mildest possible form, by Lord Granville in the House of Lords, and by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons, not for having refused to join in the Berlin Memorandum, but for having made no alternative suggestion. No doubt this was a criticism, which went very near to the root of the matter; and if it had been worked out might have led, and would have led to the severest censure. But no adequate notice was taken of the partisan course which had been pursued by the Government against the insurgents throughout the whole of the earlier transactions. The general character of the discussion was one which

might well have strengthened the hands of the Government for any policy except that of supporting the Turks —a course which they had already definitely renounced. The tone of the earliest public meetings was the same. Even Mr. Gladstone's celebrated pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors took a similar line, and although it made a heavy indictment against the past policy of the Government, it afforded them every encouragement to take a new departure. They had no right to assume, and they had every reason not to assume, that in a powerful arraignment of the Turks they were themselves arraigned; that is to say, they had no right or reason to assume this unless they still secretly desired "morally" to support the Turks. Unfortunately, such was the policy after which they hankered. This disposition was betrayed from the very first. As long as it was possible to do so they denied the massacres; and when independent members dwelt upon the evidence, their speeches were treated as party attacks upon themselves. When therefore it is said that the agitation which was roused in England after the close of the Session of 1876 was an agitation which paralysed the action of the Queen's Government, the meaning must be that it paralysed some intended action in support of Turkey. And this is true; it did paralyse such action, and it was intended to do so. For my own part, I must confess that when I first read the disclosures contained in the papers presented to Par-

liament, but which accidental circumstances prevented me from seeing until after the close of the Session, I felt as if the influence and the power of England had never been exerted in a spirit so unworthy, or in support of a policy at once so blind and so unjust.

It is only fair to the Government to admit that although the language of the Opposition in Parliament was such as to leave them entirely free to take a new departure, it was not language which could inspire the country with any adequate sense of its duties in the crisis which had arisen, or of the wrong which had been already done to the subject populations of Turkey. Mr. Gladstone alone pointed distinctly in the right direction when he declared that "the absence of European concert upon this question will infallibly imply the arriving at European convulsion," and when he also declared that if "we confined ourselves to friendly advice to the Porte, we might tender friendly advice to the Crack of Doom.' But it cannot be said that the support of the Opposition was given with any clearness, or with any sense of obligation, in favour of the policy of compelling Turkey to perform her promises to Europe. The truth is that no small section of the Liberal party had allowed themselves to be so influenced by objections to the policy of the Crimean War, and to the Treaty of 1856, as practically to forget that that war had as a fact been fought, and that those Treaties had been made. Their tone and disposition was, if not to repudiate, at least to neglect

the obligations which arose out of those transactions, and to acquiesce in a mere policy of selfish isolation. Their moral influence, indeed, would have been exerted on the side of justice and humanity, instead of, as the Government desired, on the side of the Turks. But in the actual circumstances of the case moral influence in the one direction was very nearly as useless as in the other. The English people will not be guided by men who seem to desire peace at any price, and who indicate no consciousness of those duties which attach to her not only as a great Power, but as one of those Powers which had most responsibility in the actual settlement of the East of Europe.

But if the English Government were not greatly helped by the language of Parliament, neither were they hindered in any policy except one—a policy which they dared not avow, and which they had themselves professed to abandon as impossible.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM THE BULGARIAN MASSACRES IN MAY, 1876, TO THE CONFERENCE AT CONSTANTINOPLE IN DECEMBER, 1876.

IN the course of the debate which arose in the House of Commons on the 31st July, the Prime Minister took care to intimate that, although the first call for the squadrons to Besika Bay had come from the Ambassadors, and was, as the Foreign Secretary in a recent speech to a deputation had represented it to be, a precautionary measure for the saving of life and the maintenance of order, nevertheless this did not represent the whole truth, but was accurate only "as far as it went," inasmuch as the Government of the Queen had found it necessary to reconsider the position, and had unanimously determined "that it was their duty to see that the power of England should be more efficiently represented." In another passage of the same speech the object was declared to be "that the world should know that, whatever might happen, there should be no great change in the distribution of territories in that part of the world without the knowledge and consent of England."* Such language, held by the

* Hansard, vol. ccxxxi. pp. 212, 213.

Prime Minister in Parliament, even if it had stood alone, was sufficient to change the whole aspect of the measure, and at once converted it into a political demonstration. It became of necessity, notwithstanding disclaimers which were purely formal, a threat to the other Powers of Europe which might contemplate any interference with the Government of the Porte, and a direct encouragement to Turkey to resist them.

On the same occasion the Prime Minister admitted that England had been until lately in an isolated position, because, and only because, she had determined in favour of the principle of non-interference. But, he went on to say, England was no longer isolated, because the other five Powers, after various ineffectual efforts to act upon the opposite policy, had at last adopted the principle of non-interference, or, in other words, "had come over to us."*

The correspondence we have reviewed between the English Cabinet and the other Governments of Europe is a sufficient comment on this version of the facts. We have seen that the persistent refusal of England to join in the proposed interference of the Powers had deprived it of any great prospect of success, and that on the occurrence of a revolution at Constantinople they had agreed to suspend action for a time. But even before the Bulgarian massacres

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* Hansard, ibid.

were known, and before the actual outbreak of war with Servia and Montenegro, none of the great Powers had departed from the conviction they had uniformly expressed—that some interference on the part of Europe was and would continue to be an absolute necessity. Still less were they inclined to depart from that conviction now, when the conduct of the Turks had become known throughout the world, and when it had thoroughly aroused all the passions of race and of religion in the East of Europe. Accordingly we find the convictions of the other Powers in favour not only of interference but of intervention, ripening every day at the very time when the Cabinet of the Queen was endeavouring both to restrain them and to encourage the Turks. By none was this conviction better expressed than by the Government of Italy. Within a fortnight of Lord Beaconsfield's speech, in which he boasted of the European Powers having come over to his policy of non-interference, the Italian Foreign Minister declared to the English Ambassador at Rome that now he was convinced "that the Powers could not interfere too soon, but it was horrible to contemplate the idea of Europe having held its hand while such barbarities had been committed. He said that Europe had allowed this to happen to save itself from war, that this was an egotistical policy, and that he was shocked to think of the blood that might have been saved if the Powers had not been supine and content

to hope that the reports which reached them were not true. He added that public feeling in Italy had been greatly in favour of the insurgent Provinces and of the Christian States at war with the Porte, and that had it not been for the restraining influence of Government a large army of Italian volunteers would long ère this have swelled the ranks of the enemies of the Sultan."*

The Russian Government at the same juncture, on the 15th August, 1876, saw clearly enough the real situation of affairs. Prince Gortchakow expressed his conviction to our Minister at St. Petersburg "that the English nation would be roused to indignation when it learnt the atrocities which had been committed, and that its sympathy would be given to the Christian cause."† And this is exactly what happened. The hand of the Government was forced. Just at the time when public indignation was at the hottest it became apparent that Servia would be defeated. But any complete triumph of the Turks would, under the circumstances, be intolerable to Europe. The Queen's Government were, therefore, immediately compelled to do that which they had so lately exhorted the other Powers to announce ought not to be done—namely, interfere to save Servia from the consequences of her defeat. The Cabinet bent like a willow before the storm. We have already

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* Turkey, I., 1877. No. 44, pp. 32, 33.

† Ibid., No. 52, p. 43.

seen that towards the end of August, and again in the beginning of September, they announced to the Porte that they could no longer do anything to help her, even in the extreme case of Russia declaring war. Upon this came immediately, on the 6th of September, the publication of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the Bulgarian massacres. It was not required to rouse, but it did serve to deepen,t he public horror. It spread abroad the generous indignation with which it was itself inspired, and it gaee to the public feeling that sanction and direction which the great name and station of the author were reqnired to give. On the 12th September followed one of those deputations to the Foreign Office, which at once indicated the popular excitement and gave valuable opportunities to the Foreign Secretary to explain the policy of the Government. On this occasion it was a deputation of working men, and in reply to it the English Minister found himself obliged to declare his opinion that the Bulgarian people who had suffered so much had a right to such reparation as was then possible; and, further, that "they had an undoubted right to the signal, conspicuous, and exemplary punishment of those who have been the offenders." Moreover, the Foreign Secretary thought "they had also a claim—a right—that in one manner or another we should take steps such as may secure them from a recurrence of similar abuses in the future."*

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* As reported in various Journals of the day.

It is needless to point out that in this speech the principle of non-interference was wholly abandoned, and the opposite principle was asserted: that the subject-population in Bulgaria had a claim of right on the intervention of England and of Europe.

It is remarkable that on the very day on which this reply was given, the Government of Austria expressed itself to a similar effect, and in still more definite terms. All the Powers were at this moment endeavouring to procure a cessation of hostilities between Servia and Turkey. On the 12th of September the Austro-Hungarian Minister, Count Andrassy, urged on our ambassador at Vienna the necessity of imposing an armistice and conditions of peace. "I asked him," says Sir A. Buchanan, "how he could impose them if the Porte refused? and he answered, By employing force, which could easily be done by a naval demonstration at Constantinople."* It is impossible to evade the evidence afforded by this that England was the only obstacle to the effectual intervention of Europe with a view to compel the Turks not only to make peace, but to make it upon terms such as could alone secure its endurance. It has been said on behalf of the Government, that even if England had been willing to employ force, the other Powers were not. But this is contradicted by the papers. It is true that Austria was most unwilling that European interven-

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* Ibid., No. 206, p. 132.

tion should take the form of any invasion of Turkey: because it was the great aim of Austro-Hungarian policy to limit the intervention as much as possible, and to prevent it from going one step farther than the absolute necessity of the case required. But that the will and determination of Europe should be brought to bear upon the Porte was urged, as we have seen, by no one of the Powers more earnestly than by Austria, and this for the very reason that she saw the inevitable aggravation of every danger from the policy of inaction. The particular form in which Austria desired intervention to be resorted to would probably have been sufficient for the purpose. Turkey depends largely on her Asiatic provinces for the recruitment of her armies: and if the Powers of Europe had intimated by a concerted naval demonstration that they would not suffer Turkey to defy their advice on a matter nearly concerning their own interests and the peace of the world, the Porte would have been compelled to give way. The English Cabinet did not pretend to deny the right of intervention. We have seen that at this very moment they were being compelled to hold language in order to appease public feeling, which could not be held with sincerity unless that right were admitted, and we shall see now that the use of such language became more frequent, and more definite, as the voice of public indignation became more loudly expressed in Downing Street.

The deputation from working men on the 12th September was followed by a more weighty deputation, headed by the Lord Mayor of London, on the 27th of the same month. In replying to the deputation, the Foreign Secretary spoke again, amidst interruptions of ironical laughter, of "effectual guarantees being taken against a repetition of such outrages as those which all Europe has seen with so much disgust."* He added, "I do not at all wish to disguise the fact that what has happened in Bulgaria has to a certain extent changed the position not only of our own Government, but of every European Government, in regard to Turkey and the East of Europe." Speaking of the concert of Europe, he used language which seemed to imply that the difficulty lay not in the resistance of England to all common action with a view to interference, but in getting all the Powers to agree on anything. "You must recollect that we have six Governments who must be induced to work together. We must have united action, because if we have not union we shall have no action at all."† The ingenuousness of this language, after the transactions we have traced, is indeed open to question. But nothing can mark in a more striking manner the great change which had been effected in the tone, if not in the convictions of the

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* *Times* Report, Sept. 28, 1876.
† Ibid.

Government, by that awakening of the public conscience which the Bulgarian massacres had effected.

On the 13th September, Russia had contributed something more to the new tone of the English Cabinet. On that day Count Schouvalow had called at the Foreign Office, and had communicated to the English Minister the opinion of his Government that the Great Powers ought to insist categorically on an immediate armistice, without allowing the Porte to attach any conditions to it. On this point he said Russia was "inflexibly resolved," and she only hoped that she might not be compelled to act singly against the Turks, as public opinion in Russia made it imperative on her Government to put an end to the condition of things which had so shocked the world. Liberal concessions to the insurgent provinces, securing to them administrative autonomy, ought to be not merely advised, but categorically imposed upon the Porte. "The dignity of all Europe does not allow of our contenting ourselves with promises which the Porte constantly eludes."*

Under the stimulus of such intimations, both at home and abroad, the Queen's Government was induced at last to address to the Porte, on the 21st September, a strong denunciation of the Bulgarian massacres, and an imperative demand for the punishment of the Pashas who had been designated in

* Turkey, I., 1877, No. 212, pp. 134-5.

Mr. Baring's report as the leading perpetrators of the crime. In this despatch it was declared that "no political considerations would justify the toleration of such acts, and that one of the foremost conditions for the settlement of the questions then pending must be that ample reparation should be afforded to the sufferers, and their future security guaranteed." Sir H. Elliot was desired to demand an audience of the Sultan, and in the name of the Queen and her Majesty's Government to call for reparation and justice.* It is needless to say that such language as this was worse than useless unless it was to be followed up. On the supposition that Turkey was independent in the full sense of that word, and that she was to be treated in all respects as on a level with the Christian Powers, it was language which could not be justified: whilst on the supposition, which it really involved, that Europe had a right, and was under the necessity of dealing with her in such a tone, it could only aggravate the helplessness of our position—unless England was prepared to unite with the other Powers in the threat, and, if necessary, in the use of force.

Meanwhile, ten days before this despatch, the English Foreign Secretary had communicated to the Russian Ambassador in London, in general terms, the outline of the conditions which it would be dis-

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* Ibid., No. 316, p. 237.

posed to support as the basis of a pacification. Among these conditions was one absolutely abandoning the threat which it had previously made to Servia that she would be allowed to bear the results of defeat from Turkey. Her Majesty's Government now saw that any such course would be impossible. "They would regard as inadmissible any modification of the Treaty of Paris unfavourable to Servia, the resumption of the right to garrison Servian fortresses, or the deposition of Prince Milan."*

But this was not the only change which the "just indignation" of the people of Great Britain had already effected. Two other conditions of the suggested basis were these:—First, administrative reforms, in the nature of local autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina; and secondly, guarantees of some similar kind against the future maladministration of Bulgaria. Both these conditions involved of necessity European interference in the internal affairs of Turkey, and the establishment of a European guarantee for the future on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte. How great was the change of policy involved in these conditions, may be gathered from a despatch of Sir H. Elliot of a few days' earlier date, in which that Minister spoke of the European guarantee as one of the objects and designs of Russia "against which her Majesty's Government have throughout set their face."†

* Ibid., No. 196, p. 129. † Ibid., No. 217, p. 139-40.

It is always unfortunate when one policy is abandoned, and another is not heartily adopted. It is still more unfortunate when one Minister contradicts another, and when the highest authority in the Government allows it to be perceived that the Cabinet is divided, and that no policy can be pursued with authority, because none is adopted with decision.

It was at the very time that the change of policy we have traced was being announced by the Foreign Secretary, when the Prime Minister made the first and most remarkable of those speeches outside the walls of Parliament which must be noticed in any history of the Eastern Question, because they not only reveal and explain the facts, but because at the time they powerfully contributed to influence events.

On the 20th September, at an agricultural dinner at Aylesbury, Mr. Disraeli entered at some length on an explanation of the state of foreign affairs. The most salient feature of the speech was the complaint it made, that the Queen's Government at a moment of great difficulty had ceased to have the support of the country in its policy on the Eastern Question. The Foreign Minister had, he said, at that time two things to do—the one was to secure permanent British interests of the highest importance, and the other to secure also the maintenance of European peace. Ordinarily a British Minister in such a position would have the consolation of knowing that he was backed by the country. "Gentlemen," he added, "it would

be affectation to pretend that that is the position of her Majesty's Government at this moment." He then proceeded to deprecate that outburst of public indignation which his colleagues had admitted to be just. "The danger," he added, "at such a moment, "is that designing politicians may take advantage of such sublime sentiments, and may apply them for the furtherance of their sinister ends. I do not think that there is any language that can denounce too strongly conduct of such description. He who at such a moment would avail himself of such a commanding sentiment in order to obtain his own individual ends, to a course which he knows, which he may know, to be injurious to the interests of his country, and not favourable to the welfare of mankind, is one whose conduct language cannot too strongly condemn. It outrages the principle of patriotism, which is the soul of free communities; it does more than this—it influences in the most injurious manner the common welfare of humanity. Such conduct, if it be pursued by any man at this moment, ought to be indignantly condemned by the people of England; and in the general havoc and ruin it may accomplish, it may fairly be described as worse than any of those Bulgarian atrocities of which we have heard so much."

The personal aim of this elaborate invective is of course well known, and was intended to be so. So far as this is concerned, it would have no permanent interest. But the anger which inspires it betrays the

fact that the "just indignation of the British people" had stood in the way of some policy which the Prime Minister was desirous of pursuing. What was this policy? It could not be the policy which at the moment he spoke was announced and professed by his Cabinet, which was the policy of demanding from Turkey reparation for the past and security for the future, as well as the policy of co-operation for this purpose with the other Powers of Europe. In the way of this policy the feeling which had been aroused presented no obstacle whatever. The policy which it did effectually render impossible was the policy of supporting the Turks against the just and necessary interference of Europe—the policy of seeking to maintain peace by allowing the Turks to do what they pleased in the East of Europe. The speech, therefore, of the Prime Minister clearly indicated that this was the policy which he still desired, if possible, to pursue; and at the very moment when orders were being sent to our Ambassador at Constantinople to make upon Turkey serious demands in the name of the Queen, the whole feeling which was the foundation of those demands was denounced by the Prime Minister as "an overpowering feeling which was impolitic, and founded on erroneous data"—or an enthusiasm "not excited by adequate cause, and directed to a result of questionable benefit to the country."

Another prominent feature of the speech at Aylesbury was a denunciation of Secret Societies as one of

the main sources of anxiety in the East of Europe In this, no doubt, the Prime Minister was right. It is when those Public Societies which are called Governments fail in their duty, and abdicate their proper functions, that Secret Societies find their opportunities of action.

It is needless to say that such a speech, delivered at such a moment, must have set at perfect ease the minds of the Sultan's advisers when, some few days later, Sir H. Elliot came to administer his rebuke, and to make his demands upon them.

Accordingly, we shall find that the diplomacy of the British Cabinet was quite as impotent as before. The question which now came principally into dispute had reference to the terms of the proposed armistice. The Turks were willing, or became willing, to consent to an armistice, provided it was accompanied with an agreement as to the terms of peace. But they objected to an armistice without such terms being agreed upon. The distinction was a very important one. An armistice with a basis of peace agreed upon, meant direct negotiations between the Porte and Servia. But an armistice without any basis of peace meant not only a separate negotiation, but a separate negotiation with the European Powers as parties both to the peace with Servia and to the settlement of the insurgent provinces. The Turkish proposal, therefore, came to represent the principle and the policy of non-interference; whilst the proposal of

an immediate suspension of hostilities with a subsequent and separate negotiation as to the terms of peace, came to represent the principle and the policy of making the settlement matter of European intervention, and the fulfilment of it a matter of European superintendence.

So early as the 24th of August the Prince of Servia had found himself compelled to apply to the six guaranteeing Powers to mediate between him and the Porte. The English Foreign Minister at once communicated with them all for the purpose of procuring a suspension of hostilities, and warned the Porte that "if hostilities were prolonged, the interference of some of the Powers was probable, the consequences of which might be fatal to the Turkish Empire."*

All the Powers agreed to urge upon the Porte a suspension of hostilities. In the meantime, another revolution on the 31st of August had placed a new Sultan on the throne. On the following day, the 1st September, the Foreign Secretary directed Sir H. Elliot to propose to the Porte "an armistice of not less than one month's duration, with a view to the immediate discussion of conditions of peace."† The Turks very naturally regarded the proposal to suspend hostilities at the very time when their army had achieved success as a proposal "altogether favourable to Servian interests."‡ They were ready, they said,

* Ibid., No. 78, p. 67-8.

† Ibid., No. 134, p. 91. ‡ Ibid., No. 143, p. 93.

to treat for peace on moderate terms, but they could not suspend operations till they knew the basis of it. From the Turkish point of view—that is to say, on the supposition that Turkey was to be treated as really an independent Power, and that her contest with Servia concerned herself and Servia alone—the Turkish arguments were so unanswerable that such a proposition ought not to have been made, unless the Powers who made it were all prepared to assert and enforce their right to deal with the Eastern Question as a whole, and as one in which they had a right and a duty of interference. This was the only ground on which the proposal made to Turkey could be justified, and unless this ground was to be taken no result could be expected. Nothing but compulsion or the fear of it could induce the Turks to accept the proposal made to them; and any influence of persuasion was at the same time excluded by the formal announcement that in no case, even the most extreme, could she expect our aid.

It was in the midst of the negotiation on this subject that the British Cabinet issued, on the 5th of September, that warning to Turkey which has been already quoted, intimating that the state of public opinion would not admit of the Queen's Government supporting Turkey, even in the extreme case of an attack by Russia. On the following day—the day of the publication of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet—the Foreign Secretary addressed to Sir H. Elliot a still

more urgent despatch, warning the Turkish Ministers that if they neglected the proposal for an armistice, "her Majesty's Government could do no more to avert the ruin they would have brought upon the Empire. It was not possible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation."* Sir H. Elliot reported all this language faithfully to the Porte, and added that the sympathy of the Russian people in the Servian cause had already reached such a height, that if the war continued the Russian Government would inevitably be obliged to declare openly in its favour, and there was not a Power in Europe to which the Porte could turn with the slightest hope of meeting with support.†

On the 10th September Sir H. Elliot telegraphed to the Foreign Office that the decision of the Porte to refuse an armistice was unanimous and determined. They would, however, state the basis on which they were willing to make peace. These conditions were not unreasonable, as coming from a conquering Power, and from one which had a right to dictate terms after a successful campaign. But they were terms which would have reasserted the supremacy of the Turkish Government over a Christian State which was under the guarantee of the Great Powers. The Servian fortresses were to be re-occupied; the Servian army was to be limited, and the Servian militia altogether suppressed.‡

* Ibid., No. 164, p. 108. † Ibid., No. 173, pp. 114, 115.
‡ Ibid., No. 185, p. 124.

The English Government met this intimation by informing Russia, on the 11th September, of the counter basis which England would be willing to support. We have already seen what this basis was. It excluded absolutely any departure from the *status quo* as regards Servia and Montenegro, and it contemplated an European guarantee for reforms in the insurgent provinces of Turkey.*

Both Austria and Russia now expressed to the English Government their conviction that Europe must impose upon Turkey some such terms as those which had been indicated. On the 14th September the firm language of Russia had not only secured the assent of Austria to the demand for an immediate armistice,† but it had so prevailed at Constantinople that the Porte ordered a suspension of hostilities for ten days—till the 25th September. On the 18th the English Foreign Secretary intimated to Sir H. Elliot that the suspension of hostilities would be accepted by the Queen's Government as equivalent to an armistice, trusting that the period would be extended if necessary.‡ Russia, with much moderation, agreed to take the same course, and at the same time intimated to the British Government that she accepted the basis of peace proposed by them, and would be prepared to act in concert as soon as they heard that instructions had been sent to her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople.§ On

* Ibid., No. 196, p. 129. † Ibid., No. 239, p. 205.
‡ Ibid, No. 281, p. 223. § Ibid., No. 283, p. 224.

the 21st Austria also gave her assent to the English basis, and expressed her opinion that the conditions of peace should be "enforced upon the Porte."* Germany assented somewhat later; observing at the same time that the securities required for the subject-populations of Turkey represented the very minimum that was absolutely required; Italy also was in substantial agreement. At this time, therefore, Europe was united, or appeared to be so. As this agreement among the Powers on the basis of peace proposed by England marks a decisive crisis in the history of the Eastern Question, it may be well to observe carefully what the position of affairs really was.

The legitimate object of English diplomacy was to secure some such concessions from Turkey, under the sanction of all the guaranteeing Powers, as might keep the settlement of the Eastern Question in the hands of Europe, and might prevent Russia from assuming an exclusive or even a predominant authority in the matter. For this purpose the English basis was, on the whole, a fair one. It was less, indeed, than the subject-populations desired, and less than they had a good right to fight for. But, on the other hand, it contained these two essential conditions: first, that the reforms to be granted under the name of "administrative autonomy" were to be of a substantial charac-

* Ibid., No. 322, p. 240.

ter; and secondly, that the concession of them was to be in the form, and involving all the consequences, of an engagement to Europe.

The consent and support of all the Powers having been obtained to this basis, it was, above all things, necessary that every Power should insist upon the acceptance of it by the Porte with equal determination, and especially that nothing should be done to make it appear that Russia alone was in earnest, and that Russia alone would be willing to enforce the common opinion of the Powers. Any conduct or language pointing to such conclusions must have the worst effect. On the one hand it must lead the insurgent populations to see that they had nothing to hope except from Russia; on the other hand, it must lead the Turks to conclude that they had nothing to fear except from the same Power. But more than this, knowing as the Turks did the jealousy and antipathy with which Russia was regarded in England, and in other parts of Europe, any language of this kind must have led them to calculate, with good reason, on the effect of this antipathy, if Russia should be forced to act alone. And if, in addition to the use of language justifying such calculations, any disposition was evinced to depart from, or to compromise, the new basis put forward by the Powers, then everything was done to secure the failure of the negotiations, and to precipitate a bloody war.

Now, this was precisely the tone of the language

held and the character of the course taken by the English Cabinet. They did not abstain from threats, but they threatened exclusively in the name of Russia. On the other hand, they were not firm in adhering even to their own basis.

On the 21st September her Majesty's Government formally intimated to the Porte that the counter basis of peace put forward by it was considered "inadmissible;" whilst the basis proposed by England was explained, and Sir H. Elliot was instructed that he "could not too strongly impress upon the Porte the urgency of the situation, and the advantage which would be gained by a prompt and ready acceptance of the proposed basis of pacification."* On the 25th Sir H. Elliot urged acceptance of the English basis under the threat, not that it would be enforced by Europe, but that if it were rejected by the Porte, war would probably arise with Russia, whilst Great Britain would be obliged to abandon Turkey to her fate.†

On the 26th September the Russian Ambassador in London communicated confidentially to the Foreign Secretary a despatch from Prince Gortchakow, stating that the Russian Government wished to propose to those of England and Austria the occupation of Bosnia by an Austrian force, the occupation of Bulgaria by a Russian force, and the occupation of the Bosphorus

* Ibid., No. 324, pp. 241, 242. † Ibid., No. 389, pp. 308, 309.

by the united fleets of all nations. The mere threat of these measures, Russia thought, would bring the Turks to terms. Count Schouvalow, however, was instructed to add that if, in the opinion of the English Foreign Secretary, the naval measure proposed alone would be preferable, the Russian Government would be content to make this proposal by itself, and to depart from the two other measures of territorial occupation.* It will be seen that the Russian proposal in this last form coincided completely with the proposal which had been made by the Austro-Hungarian Government, and represented, therefore, a course to which the assent of united Europe could have been readily obtained. But a naval occupation of Turkish waters by the combined fleets of Europe would have been a great deal more than a demonstration. It would have been a most powerful and yet a probably bloodless means of exercising effective pressure on the Porte. The recruitment of the Turkish Army from the Asiatic Provinces of the Sultan could have been prevented. It is difficult to see how Turkey could have resisted such a measure. Morally, it would have gone far to save her dignity by virtue of its European character. Physically, it would have rendered resistance hopeless. The responsibility, therefore, of refusing this proposal of Russia, with all that it involved, lies at the door of the British Government.

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Ibid., No. 408, p. 317.

On the following day, 27th September, the Foreign Secretary became aware that Turkey would object to the English basis on two points of capital importance. The first was an objection to the engagement in respect to internal reforms being put into the form of a protocol; and the second was an objection to the word "autonomy" as applied to the privileges which the Porte was willing to concede. It is needless to say that the first of these objections went to the root of the whole matter, and was an objection to the principle of making any engagement to the European Powers. The second objection indicated the insuperable jealousy of the Porte to any effective guarantees for the reforms so often promised.

On the 2nd October Sir H. Elliot had to announce that the General Council had confirmed a general project of reform to be granted by the Sultan, but that the words "protocol" and "administrative autonomy," had been entirely rejected.* To this the English Foreign Secretary replied, not by any intimation of the common determination of Europe, but by again threatening the Porte with the vengeance of Russia.†

On the 4th October Count Schouvalow communicated to the Foreign Secretary a telegraphic despatch from Prince Gortchakow, then with the Emperor at Livadia, stating that, as fighting had recommenced in the Morava valley, and as negotiations were being

* Ibid., No. 483, p. 370. † Ibid., No. 484, p. 370.

protracted by the Turks, the Emperor proposed to the guaranteeing Powers to stay this bloodshed by immediately imposing an armistice, or a truce for six weeks, on the two parties, so as to give time to the Cabinets of Europe to confer on a definite peace.*

The English Cabinet on the 4th October declined the proposal of the Russian Government for a joint naval demonstration, but agreed to give its support to the demand for an armistice of not less than a month.† On the 5th October Sir H. Elliot was instructed to inform the Porte, that in the event of this being refused, he would leave Constantinople, as it would then be evident that all farther exertions on the part of her Majesty's Government to save the Porte from ruin will have been useless.‡ This proposal of an armistice for not less than a month was expressly explained to be with the further view that a Conference should "immediately follow"§ for the final settlement. It will be seen, therefore, that it involved that principle of further European interference which was so obnoxious to the Turks. Accordingly, Sir H. Elliot, on the 7th October, telegraphed to ask whether it was yet too late to separate the question of the conclusion of peace with the Principalities, from the question of the settlement of the insurgent provinces. He reported that the Sultan

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* Ibid., No. 505, p. 387.
† Ibid., No. 506, p. 388.
‡ Ibid., No. 516, p. 391.
§ Ibid., No. 512, p. 390.

"could hardly understand how proposals which might have been expected from Russia, could have been made by her Majesty's Government." To this reproach, the English Ambassador had frankly explained that his Government acted under the pressure of necessity—the necessity being that they should bring forward propositions to which they could secure the assent of other Governments.*

On the 10th October it was announced that the Grand Council at Constantinople had agreed, not to a short armistice of a month or six weeks, but to a very long one, even to an armistice of five months.† Without a moment's hesitation the Queen's Government jumped at this proposal.

It never seems to have occurred to the English Foreign Minister that there must be some design under this sudden generosity of the Porte, and that some entirely different character must be intended for the armistice, when its period was to be prolonged so far beyond the desire or suggestion of any of the Powers. Yet there were, and had been, clear enough indications of what the Turks meant. The short armistice was a proposal behind which lay a European Conference. The long armistice was a proposal, on the contrary, behind which lay the getting rid of any Conference, and the acceptance, instead, of a new schedule of Turkish promises.

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* Ibid., No. 538, p. 403. † Ibid., No. 584, p. 444.

Without a suspicion apparently of this astute diplomacy of the Porte, on the same day on which this announcement was received, the Foreign Secretary urged the acceptance of the new Turkish proposal on Austria and Russia,* and telegraphed congratulations to Sir H. Elliot on the success he had achieved in bringing about an armistice. It was mainly due to his ability and perseverance.† It does indeed seem very strange that the English Foreign Office should have been blind to the significance attaching to this substitution by the Porte, of a very long armistice for a very short one. Other Governments were not so easily deceived. On the 12th October, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs refused to advise Servia to accept such an armistice, as he considered that it would be ruin to the Servian cause, and that the proposal of it by the Porte only aggravated the situation.‡ The Russian chargé d'affaires at Constantinople at once expressed himself adversely to a long armistice. Austria was in favour of accepting the Turkish proposal, because Austria had all along disliked the idea of a Conference, and was glad of any proposal which would avoid it. The German Government hesitated, but finally admitted the Russian objections to the long armistice proposed by Turkey.§ The English Foreign Minister, in these cir-

* Ibid., Nos. 587, 588, pp. 444, 445.
† Ibid., No. 591, p. 446.
‡ Ibid., No. 596, p. 449. § Ibid., No. 698, p. 498.

cumstances, having hastily committed himself to the Porte, tried to alarm Russia into acceptance of the Turkish proposal. He intimated that already the Russian proposal to occupy Bulgaria, which was publicly known, had roused a feeling which might counterbalance the anger which had arisen against the Turks, and would certainly do so if it were once believed by the English nation that Constantinople was threatened. Rightly or wrongly, he said, the conclusion to which every one would come, would be that the rejection by Russia of the Turkish proposal indicated a fixed purpose of going to war.*

On the very day before that on which this language was addressed to the Russian Ambassador, the Turks indicated what they meant by the long armistice. They communicated in an official Note, the new project of reforms which the Porte proposed to promulgate on its own authority.†

The Russian decision followed at once. It was in these terms, dated Livadia, October 14, 1876: "We do not think an armistice of six months necessary or favourable to the conclusion of a lasting peace, which we desire; we cannot put pressure on Servia and Montenegro, to make them consent to such a prolonged uncertainty of the difficulties of their position; lastly, we hold that the financial and commercial

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* Ibid., No. 619, pp. 464, 465.
† Ibid., No. 615, p. 463.

position of the whole of Europe, already intolerable, would suffer still more by this delay. We must insist on an armistice of from a month to six weeks, as originally proposed by England, with power to prolong it, if the progress of negotiations renders this needful."*

In proportion as Russia was firm and resolute, the English Cabinet became more and more alarmed, and more and more disposed to retreat even from the little it had said which was indicative of any firmness. Thus, on the 16th October, our ambassador at Berlin was anxiously ordered to explain that when the Queen's Government had threatened to withdraw Sir H. Elliot from Constantinople, if the Turks refused the English proposals, "no rupture of relations with the Porte was ever contemplated." The only object would have been to "show displeasure," but there would have been no diplomatic rupture.†

On the 18th October the Russian Ambassador pointed out to the English Foreign Secretary, that no answer had been given to the objections urged by Russia against the Turkish proposal; that the Turks adhered inflexibly to the term of six months for the armistice; that they rejected the system of "autonomy," and the proposed protocol, thus indirectly refusing the basis proposed by England, and affirming the sufficiency of the reforms promised by the Porte. Prince

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* Ibid., No. 630, pp. 467, 468. † Ibid., No. 670, p. 482.

Gortchakow asked whether this defiance of all Europe was to be accepted. Russia, he said, would not accept it. No Power was more desirous of a general European agreement in the interests of humanity and civilisation. But there were limits which could not be passed consistently with honour and dignity. The obstinacy of the Porte would cease if it were not encouraged by the absence of union among the Powers.*

In this position of affairs, the Cabinet of the Queen made an appeal to the Chancellor of the German Empire.† Germany was still uncommitted, and unpledged. The efforts of her Majesty's Government were exhausted. Could not Prince Bismarck intervene?

Seeing England so vacillating and so ready to depart from her own proposals, the Austro-Hungarian Government, which had reluctantly given its adhesion to the English basis, now begged to inquire whether the Cabinet of St. James had any policy at all. Count Andrassy wished to know clearly what course her Majesty's Government were disposed to maintain and recommend, in order that he might act in concert.‡ The Foreign Secretary had no other reply to give than that having accepted the Turkish proposals of an armistice for six months, he could not make any new proposition; but that if Turkey were willing to

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* Ibid., No. 703, pp. 500, 501. † Ibid., No. 706, p. 501.
‡ Ibid., No. 712, p. 504.

reduce the length of the armistice as desired by Russia, her Majesty's Government would place no obstacles in the way.

The German Government would give no greater help to us than we gave to Austria. Germany would not put herself forward into a position on the Eastern Question which did not naturally belong to her. Prince Bismarck, however, recommended the adoption of the six weeks' armistice, which was the Russian demand, as the longest term to which agreement could be obtained.*

On the 20th October, therefore, the Foreign Secretary was obliged to inform Count Schouvalow that having accepted the Turkish proposal, and having therefore departed from the basis he had himself previously proposed, he had no other alternative to suggest.†

It was under these circumstances that, on the 24th October, the Russian Ambassador in London was instructed to ask the Foreign Secretary whether it was really true that England had abandoned the basis suggested by herself. To this question only a very evasive reply could be made. The English Government, it was said, "could not abandon ideas which they had put forward only a month ago." But when it seemed too probable that the basis of peace proposed by England and supported by Russia, in common with the other

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* Ibid., No. 713, p. 504. † Ibid., No. 716, p. 506.

Powers, would not be accepted by the Porte, the Russian Government had itself suggested joint occupations, and joint naval demonstrations. England had rejected this proposal, and had substituted an armistice with a view to a Conference. But no basis had been laid down for a Conference, and the expediency of a Conference at all was yet under discussion. It was true, therefore, that the English basis had ceased to be pressed upon the Porte.*

On the 30th October, the English Foreign Secretary addressed to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, an historical summary of the previous negotiations. It was a summary intended to defend the Cabinet for having so weakly abandoned the proposals put forward by itself, and for having assented to a very different proposal, put forward by the Turks. It had the usual conclusion :—"Her Majesty's Government cannot consider that it lies with them to advance any fresh propositions."†

But results which this kind of weakness and vacillation could not obtain, were again secured by the firmness of Russia. The Porte agreed to reduce the period of the armistice, provided it might be prolonged if necessary.‡

In the meantime, however, the Turks had pushed on their military operations, and on the 29th of October

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* Ibid., No. 778, pp. 545, 546. † Ibid., No. 800, p. 561.
‡ Ibid., No. 748, p. 531.

gained a complete victory over the Servian army, taking the whole of its positions on the left of the Morava, inflicting heavy loss of men, and capturing eleven guns.* Russia now saw that there was not a moment to be lost if the Principality was to be saved from the horrors of Turkish conquest, and the revelries of Bashi-Bazouks.

Accordingly, on the 31st October, the Russian Government ordered General Ignatieff to demand from the Porte the acceptance within forty-eight hours of an armistice for six weeks. Should the Porte not accept, the Russian Ambassador was to leave Constantinople and all diplomatic relations were to be broken off.†

The result is best described in the two following telegraphic despatches from Sir A. Elliot, both dated on the 1st November, the one at 11.40 A.M., and the second at 7 P.M. The first was, "Russian ultimatum was sent in last night." The second was, "Porte will consent to the demands of the Russian ultimatum, and orders are already sent to the military commanders to suspend all operations. An answer in this sense will be sent to General Ignatieff this evening."‡

It was on the day following this great Russian success that Lord Augustus Loftus had that conversation

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* Ibid., No. 796, p. 554. † Ibid., No. 808, p. 565.
‡ Ibid., Nos. 819 and 820, p. 571.

with the Russian Emperor at Livadia, of which so much has been said and written. It may be well to record here the exact words of the report by the English Ambassador of this celebrated conversation. After a short but clear account of the previous negotiations, the Emperor declared that "the present state of things was intolerable, and could no longer be allowed to continue, and unless Europe was prepared to act with firmness and energy, he should be obliged to act alone." His Majesty then referred more especially to his relations with England. He said he regretted to see that there still existed in England an inveterate suspicion of Russian policy, and a continual fear of Russian aggression and conquest. He had on several occasions given the most solemn assurances that he desired no conquest, that he aimed at no aggrandisement, and that he had not the smallest wish or intention to be possessed of Constantinople. . . . . His Majesty pledged his sacred word of honour in the most solemn and earnest manner that he had no intention of acquiring Constantinople, and that if necessity should oblige him to occupy a portion of Bulgaria, it would only be provisionally, and until peace and the safety of the Christian population were secured."*

It is to be observed with regard to the whole of this conversation that it had reference to the supposed case

* Ibid., No. 952, p. 642-5.

of Europe agreeing to combined action against Turkey for the attainment of common objects, and the fulfilment of common duties. It had no reference to the case of Russia being compelled to act alone, or to the event of her coming out victorious from a costly and bloody war. Some of the assurances of the Emperor may be construed to apply even to this case. But it clearly was not the case under contemplation by the Emperor himself.

The triumphant success of Russia in her demand that Turkey should grant an armistice in the war with Servia was obtained at a moment when the Turks were naturally elated by a complete victory over the army of the Principality in the valley of Morava. It was, indeed, this very victory which induced the Emperor to make his peremptory demand—determined as he was that the Turks should not be allowed to re-establish over Servia that direct dominion which the invasion and subjugation of the Principality would have enabled them to claim. The true lesson of this Russian success was that which the Emperor read to Sir Augustus Loftus when he pointed out to the English Ambassador, with some touch of scorn, that it was a success which had been obtained simply "by a little firmness."* There could not, indeed, be a more signal illustration of the facility with which Turkey could be dealt with by a definite and determined will.

* Ibid., No. 953, p. 644.

Russia having now obtained this great diplomatic victory, showed a most conciliatory spirit in her further proposals. An excellent despatch was addressed by Prince Gortchakoff to the Russian Ambassador in London, on the 3rd of November. He pointed out that whilst even the public opinion of England had been aroused, that of Russia had been still more excited:—"For we are too near to these countries, and have too many relations with them, to confine ourselves to merely theoretical sympathies. This imposes on the Emperor duties from which he cannot shrink. But these duties are shared by all civilized Europe. What prevents England from fulfilling her part by joining with us for the protection of the Christians, and sharing with us their gratitude and sympathy? The Eastern Question is not only a Russian question. It involves the repose of Europe, peace and general prosperity, permanent and Christian civilisation."* In this spirit Russia now urged upon England that the representatives of the six Powers at Constantinople should be authorised to commence discussions on the basis of peace which had been proposed by England. The Queen's Government replied to this by pointing out some objections, not unreasonable, to the time and place and persons suggested by Russia for the proposed consultation, and by declaring that they were prepared, instead, to take the initiative

* Ibid., No. 1065, Inclos. p. 737.

in proposing that a European Conference should be held.*

Without loss of time her Majesty's Government fulfilled this engagement, and in a Circular despatch to the Queen's Representatives at all the great Capitals of Europe, they formally proposed that a Conference should be held at Constantinople, on the basis of peace already put forward by England on the 5th October. The English Government further proposed that the Powers should acknowledge the integrity and independence of Turkey as a preliminary condition, thus limiting the general scope and object of the changes contemplated by the Conference; and that they should also sign a Declaration such as had been signed in 1840 in the Protocol for the pacification of the Levant, and again in 1860 in regard to the pacification of Syria, to the effect that none of the Powers would seek for any exclusive influence, or for any territorial aggrandisement.

After some discussion and hesitation on points of comparative detail, the proposal of the English Government was acquiesced in by all the Powers, and on the 8th of November it was intimated to Sir H. Elliot that Lord Salisbury had been appointed by the Queen to be her Majesty's special Ambassador to attend the proposed Conference jointly with himself.

At this moment it may be said that England had,

* Ibid., No. 903, p. 611.

to some extent, recovered her position, and everything depended on the question whether she could keep it by having some definite policy, and by having spirit to enforce it. She had been chiefly instrumental in securing the general assent of Europe to a Congress. Russia indeed had always been willing. But Austria had been adverse to this measure, and Germany had been, to say the least, indifferent. England had moreover laid down a basis for peace, and for Turkish Reforms. It was a basis conceived in the most conservative spirit, and involving the very minimum of change. But it was a basis, at least, founded on the principle of European interference, and of demanding European guarantees. As such it had received at last general assent. She had, moreover, given importance to the proposed Conference by objecting to it being a mere meeting of the ordinary Representatives of the Powers at Constantinople, and by insisting that it should be a Congress of special Envoys. She had further increased the dignity and significance of the Congress by appointing to it one of the most distinguished members of the Cabinet of the Queen. All this was excellent—on one supposition, namely, that it was intended to ascertain the will of Europe, and to insist on that will being carried into effect. But on the supposition that it was intended to do nothing more than consult the Turks, and to submit to their will, it could only end, as it did end, in discomfiture and humiliation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONFERENCE AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

IT is impossible fully to understand the proceedings or the results of the Conference at Constantinople without some farther reference to the circumstances and negotiations out of which it arose.

When the proposal for a Conference had first come to be seriously entertained, the Russian Ambassador intimated it as not unlikely that his Government would insist on the exclusion from it of any Turkish representatives. For this three reasons were given: first, that it would be undesirable that the Porte should be witness of any differences that might exist among the Powers, until these had been settled, and the result submitted to the Porte as a proposal from the united Powers; secondly, that evidence could not be obtained as to the real condition of the Turkish provinces if the witnesses were to be called upon to speak before the representatives of their own Government; and thirdly, that if the Conference were held at Constantinople the diplomatic rule would be that the Turkish Plenipotentiary should preside, which would place the others in a false position.

It is obvious that these objections all more or less involved the supposition that the final object of the Conference was not merely to come to some agreement with Turkey, but to ascertain the will of Europe, and to enforce it, if necessary, on the Porte.

It cannot be doubted that although this proposition to exclude Turkey from the Conference was made by the Russian Ambassador only as one coming in the meantime from himself, it was put forward by desire of his Government, for the purpose of taking soundings. Knowing, however, the weakness of the English Cabinet on the subject of putting any compulsion on Turkey, Count Schouvalow made a very dexterous suggestion as a modification of the proposal that the Turks should be altogether excluded. He suggested that the first sittings of the Conference at Constantinople should be held by the representatives of the six Powers alone, and that the Turkish Government should be invited to send a representative to take part in the discussions only when a definitive plan had been agreed upon, at all events in its broader features, which could be submitted to the consideration of the Porte.*

That the Powers should first come to some understanding among themselves as to the nature and extent of the demands which it would be necessary to make upon the Porte, was indeed most expedient, if not absolutely requisite. But that they should do

* Turkey, I., 1877, No. 579, p. 441.

so by holding a Conference in the Turkish Capital from which the Turks were to be excluded, was a blunder so glaring that it is astonishing it should have been committed. It ought to have been obvious at a glance that this course, if adopted, would be quite as evidently connected with a policy of ultimate compulsion on the Porte, and would be even more offensive to that Government, than the course of holding a Conference which should be openly and avowedly a separate Conference of the six Powers alone. The mere device of calling the first sittings of the Conference "Preliminary," and the subsequent sittings "Full," or "Regular," or "Plenary," could not alter the nature of things, nor even the appearance of things. Turkey, in her own Capital, was to be excluded from those sittings of the Conference which were to decide at least the "proposals" of Europe respecting her own internal affairs, and she was to be called in only when those Powers had agreed among themselves what these proposals were to be. There could not be a greater indignity offered to any Power which was treated as independent. It was a course, therefore, which rendered it in the highest degree improbable that the Government of Turkey could be brought voluntarily to accept the proposals which might be made. It was consistent only with the policy of compulsion, and with that policy in its most decided form.

Yet, strange to say, this most astute suggestion of Count Schouvalow was actually adopted by the

Powers. His success in this matter is a signal illustration of the advantage which a man or a government which knows its own mind has, in such negotiations, over others who have no policy except that of avoiding and postponing any definite conclusion. The French Government made the same suggestion as if it came from themselves, but as one which would conciliate Russia.*

In the meantime the Porte was giving due notice of its desire and its intention to resist a Conference altogether. It had proposed the long armistice of six months, not with a view to the meeting of such a Conference, but with a view to prevent it. The substitute was to be a new batch of Turkish promises, and that happy development of local councils which we have seen exposed by Consul Holmes. Moreover, the Turks very frankly informed the British Government of the methods of combat which they held in reserve, even if a Conference should assemble. On the 13th October, Musurus Pasha communicated to the English Foreign Secretary a telegraphic despatch from his Government, in which it was announced that "Europe would have the opportunity of being edified by the serious and practical character of these promises of the Imperial Government," but in which, on the other hand, the English Government was warned of "all the means of non-acceptance, and of all the resistance which the Porte would be able to oppose

* Ibid., No. 609, p. 457.

to every project having for its object to force it to deviate from its course."*

If the language and conduct of the English Cabinet had been intended to encourage the Turks in the policy of evasion and obstruction thus openly avowed, it could not have been more admirably adapted for the purpose. The Queen's Government did not tell them that it was in favour of a Conference from conviction that the interference of Europe was just and necessary in the interests of the subject populations. It did not tell them that its own agents most favourable to Turkey and most hostile to Russia, denounced its promised reforms as worse than a delusion. It did not tell them that British interests as well as the interests of the rest of Europe demanded a settlement founded on definite engagements undertaken to the guaranteeing Powers. What it did tell the Turks was something very different. It told them that England had proposed the Conference, and had put forward a basis for its discussion, because she could not help herself, and because unless some such proposals were made Russia would intervene alone. The language of the Foreign Secretary at this juncture continued to be language of precisely the same character as had been held throughout—language expressive of reluctant assent to the unfortunate necessities of the case. Threats, indeed, were used, but they were threats brandished in the name of Russia.

* Ibid., No. 612, pp. 461, 462.

On the 11th of November the Queen's Government embodied in a formal despatch to the Turkish Minister in London their views on the situation, and on the objections made by Turkey to the proposed Conference. The pith of it lay in a single sentence: "Her Majesty's Government understand and appreciate the feelings with which the Porte may regard that proposal, but I must remind His Excellency that, under the circumstances of the situation, there was no alternative." The Porte was reminded that Russia had already proposed the occupation of Turkish territory and naval demonstrations at the Capital. The Queen's Government had resisted these proposals, but it was evident that unless some other suggestion were made "serious complications might ensue." Then the Porte was reminded that, after all, it had already agreed to give promises to Europe, and it was mildly pleaded that the Powers were not precluded by any treaty from "discussing the pacification of the Turkish provinces and the measures of administrative reform best adapted for that purpose." The Porte was assured that the new Imperial Hatt, proclaiming reforms, would doubtless receive the amplest consideration, "but her Majesty's Government regret that they could not accept the proclamation of those reforms as itself sufficient, nor, were they disposed to do so, would there be any probability of the other Powers assenting to such a course."*

But this mixture of vicarious threatening and of

weak cajolery was not the only symptom of the real attitude of the British Government. Its fleet was still ostentatiously paraded at Besika Bay, and the Ministerial press continued to give to its presence all the significance which could be most hostile to the interests of peace. At the same moment the Prime Minister took occasion of the usual festivities at the Guildhall on the 9th November, to threaten Russia with the armed resistance of the British Empire. Russia, it must be remembered, had, at this time, accepted the English basis—had agreed to the European Conference—had departed from her proposal of joint occupations and of naval demonstrations. She had by her own independent action procured that cessation of hostilities which England had failed to get, and had given no other cause for offence than the announcement of her Sovereign, that unless securities were obtained for reforms in Turkey, he would be compelled to act alone. It was at such a moment that the Prime Minister thought it wise to utter the following words, purporting to describe the disposition and the power of England as contrasted with those of a Government which was left unnamed: "Peace is especially an English policy. She is not an aggressive Power, for there is nothing which she desires. What she wishes is to maintain and to enjoy the unexampled Empire which she has built up. But although the policy of England is peace, there is no

* Ibid., No. 924, pp. 619, 620.

country so well prepared for war as our own. If she enters into a conflict in a righteous cause—and I will not believe England will go to war except in a righteous cause—if the contest is one which concerns her liberty, her independence, or her Empire, her resources, I feel, are inexhaustible. She is not a country that, when she enters into a campaign, has to ask herself whether she can support a second or a third campaign. She enters into a campaign which she will not terminate till right is done."*

This speech was delivered in London on the night of the 9th November. Within twenty-four hours the following louder and clearer voice came from Moscow, the ancient capital of the Czars: "During my whole reign," said the Emperor of Russia on the night of the 10th November, "I have endeavoured to obtain for the Christians in the East what right and justice demand. Unfortunately, my pacific efforts have not obtained the desired result. A Conference is now about to assemble at Constantinople in which Russia will present her demands. If her endeavours are not crowned with success, Russia will be forced to take up arms, and I count on the support of my people."†

Within another week of the speech of the English Premier, it was answered by Russia in the most practical of all forms, as announced by telegraph from Lord Augustus Loftus, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg:—

* *Times* Report, Nov. 10, 1876.

† Turkey I., 1877, No. 921, p. 619.

"*November 17th*, 1876.—Russia mobilizes six corps d'armée, four of which constitute active army, and two corps d'armée, army of observation. Troops mobilized, 160,000 men and 648 guns."*

This movement had the double advantage of being at once a reply to Mr. Disraeli, and at the same time a great reinforcement to the only argument which the Foreign Secretary was in the habit of impressing upon the Turks—namely, that their continued refusals would lead to "serious complications."

On the following day, the 18th November, Count Schouvalow communicated to the Cabinet of St. James's the formal explanation of his Government as to the step which had thus been taken. There was no bluster in it, no vague innuendos, no empty threats. It was a clear and simple recapitulation of events. Russia did not even take to herself the credit which undoubtedly belonged to her, of having by her single action, secured the armistice which alone now made negotiation possible. All the merit was ascribed to Europe as a whole. "The cabinets," said this weighty document, "have consulted together, and have recognised the necessity, for the honour of humanity, and for the sake of the general peace, of putting an end to this state of things. They have put a stop to bloodshed by imposing an armistice on both parties, and have agreed to fix the basis on which peace is to be re-established, so as to give the Christian popula-

* Ibid., No. 1008, p. 693.

tion serious guarantees against the incorrigible abuses of the Turkish administration, as well as against the unbridled arbitrary proceedings of the Ottoman functionaries, and to reassure Europe against the periodical return of a crisis attended by so much bloodshed. . . . . But while diplomacy has been deliberating for a whole year, with a view to reduce to practice the combined wishes of Europe, the Porte has had time to summon from the recesses of Asia and Africa, the ban and arrière-ban of the least disciplined forces of Islamism, to rouse Mussulman fanaticism, and to crush under the weight of its numbers, the Christian population, who are struggling for their very existence. The perpetrators of the horrible massacres, which have so shocked Europe, remain unpunished, and at his very moment, their example tends to propagat e and perpetuate throughout the whole of the Ottoman Empire, and in full view of indignant Europe, similar acts of barbarism and violence. Under these circumstances, his Majesty the Emperor has deemed it necessary to mobilize a portion of his army. His Imperial Majesty does not wish for war, and will do his utmost to avoid it. But he is determined not to halt before that the principles which have been recognised by the whole of Europe, as just, humane, and necessary, and which public opinion in Russia has taken up with the utmost energy, have been fully carried out and secured by efficient guarantees."*

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Ibid., No. 1011, pp. 694, 695.

The successful example of determination set by the Russian Government even succeeded in galvanising certain members of the English Cabinet into some energy, at least of speech. It was of speech, however, and nothing more. On the 20th of November, the Home Secretary said at Birmingham: "The time has come when what I may call the waste-paper currency of Turkish promises shall be paid in sterling coin."* Nothing could be more satisfactory than this, if anything definite had been meant by it.

On the same day Turkey, with great reluctance, accepted the Conference. The truth is that it had been agreed upon without consent of the Porte, and all the arrangements had been made before that consent was obtained. The Foreign Secretary had more than once declared that the persistent objections of Turkey to any such assembly could not be admitted. It was therefore under compulsion only that finally they made a virtue of necessity, and on the 20th November, accepted the Conference. It coincided with the day on which Lord Salisbury started for Constantinople. He arrived there on the 5th December.

On that day Prince Bismarck made an important statement in the German Reichstag, in which a very clear intimation was made of the nature of the situa-

* Sequence of Events in the Eastern Question, p. 17.

tion, both as regarded the attitude of Russia and that of the German Empire. "Should the Conference not lead to any results, and should Russia determine to obtain by force of arms what she has failed to obtain by pacific means, we shall put no veto on her action, since the objects she pursues are also our own."*

It was in the full knowledge of this position of affairs that the instructions to Lord Salisbury were drawn up. Like the speech of the Home Secretary, they caught with fidelity the echo of the times. If there had been any real intention of acting up to the spirit of these instructions, they were deserving of all praise.† Referring to Turkish promises of Reform as a proposed substitute for a European Conference, the Queen's Government replied "that the mere announcement of reforms by the Porte cannot be accepted as sufficient, and even if her Majesty's Government would be disposed to accept such an announcement, no other Power would do so." Nothing could be more emphatic than this, not only as regarded the attitude of Russia, but as regarded the attitude of Europe as a whole. But this was not all. The same language was repeated in every form. "It was in vain for the Porte to expect that the Powers would be satisfied with the mere general assurances which have already been so

* Ibid. † Turkey, II., 1877. No. 1, pp. 1–10.

often given." Nor was this language held as the language of might apart from right. It was defended and explained as language founded on imperative considerations of public interest. "The Powers had a right to demand in the interest of the peace of Europe that they should examine for themselves the measures required for the reform of the administration of the disturbed provinces, and that adequate security should be provided for carrying those measures into operation." If objections were again taken by the Porte, such as had been already put forward, Lord Salisbury was instructed "to state positively that they could not be entertained." For this peremptory tone and position of the Powers, an excellent reason was given:—"The whole history of the Ottoman Empire, since it was admitted into the European concert, under the engagements of the Treaty of Paris, has proved that the Porte is unable to guarantee the execution of reforms in the provinces by Turkish officials, who accept them with reluctance and neglect them with impunity." The conclusion was pressed home that there must be "external guarantees"—that is, positive engagements, undertaken in the face of Europe, and as binding towards the Powers.

The only reservation expressly made in mitigation of all this strong and resolute language was as follows:—"Having thus stated the nature of the guarantees which her Majesty's Government considers

may fairly be demanded of the Porte, it remains for me to state explicitly that her Majesty's Government cannot countenance the introduction into the Conference of proposals, however plausible or well-intentioned, which would bring foreign armies into Turkish territory, in violation of the engagements by which the guaranteeing Powers are solemnly bound." If these words meant that the European Powers under the Treaties of 1856 were precluded from enforcing upon Turkey the fulfilment of her promises to them, they were words without any rational meaning. But the concluding paragraph of the instructions reverted once more to the language of menace. It was not obscurely intimated that although England would not herself sanction foreign occupation, neither would she prevent it. It was to be understood by the Porte that Great Britain was resolved not to sanction misgovernment or oppression, and that if the Porte, by obstinacy or apathy, opposes the efforts which are now making to place the Ottoman Empire on a more secure basis, the responsibility of the consequences which may ensue will rest solely with the Sultan and his advisers."

It will be seen that the general result of these instructions was, first, to assert strongly the right and the necessity for European interference, and, secondly, to declare that if this right were not admitted by the Porte, Russia alone would be left free to enforce it.

In passing through Berlin Lord Salisbury heard

from the German Emperor the same language which he and his colleagues had been at last persuaded to adopt. His Majesty considered it impossible for Europe any longer to accept the mere promises of the Porte. Lord Salisbury in reply declared it to be "the full intention of her Majesty's Government to insist on the provision of adequate guarantees," adding only this gentle qualification, "but at the same time I said that I feared that an occupation of Turkish territory would lead to war, and that the limits of such a war could not be foreseen."* Similar language, with a shade of difference in each, was held in the Capitals of Austria and of Italy. At Vienna, where a Russian occupation of Turkey was as obnoxious as in England, the dread of it seems to have been used by the British Plenipotentiary to enforce on the Austro-Hungarian Government the necessity of securing from the Porte "not only the enactment of any further reforms, but also guarantees for the efficacious execution of those which had been already sanctioned."†

On the 29th of November, Sir H. Elliot reported that at a personal audience given him by the Sultan he had adopted a similar tone, and had told his Majesty that "it had now become a duty for the European Powers to see that engagements taken by the Porte were now carried out."‡

* Ibid., No. 22, p. 17. † Ibid., No. 27, p. 18.
‡ Ibid., No. 49, p. 28.

It was in accordance with this tone of firmness and resolution adopted in the language of the British Government, that their Plenipotentiary put himself at once almost ostentatiously in direct communication with the Russian Ambassador, General Ignatieff, and within three days of his arrival at Constantinople had reported to his colleagues at home the proposals of that diplomatist. These proposals involved the constitution of a new Bulgaria, covering nearly the whole area "coloured yellow in Kiepert's map, except Varna, Adrianople, and Wodena. Over this province there were to be Christian Governors, to be named with assent of the Powers and to be irremovable for five years. Other administrative reforms were specified in some detail, and the whole was to be superintended by an international Commission with a sufficient material force at its command to make its decisions respected, and preserve tranquillity." Lord Salisbury reported by telegraph that this last demand created the greatest difficulty; but that it was now proposed that the force should consist of 6000 Belgians or Italians. "He had promised to report the proposition, but he had not encouraged it." But neither on the other hand had he treated it as inadmissible.

This telegraphic despatch reached the Cabinet on the 9th December, and on the 12th Lord Salisbury was instructed to report what the other Plenipo-

tentiaries thought of the scheme.* It is needless to say that this question indicated that there was nothing in the Russian proposals which was treated as impossible.

On the 14th December the first Preliminary Conference was held, and the place of meeting was no other than the Russian Embassy. This was an excellent selection if it were intended to act in the spirit it indicated—the spirit, namely, of a cordial desire to act in union with the Great Powers, and especially with Russia, which had accepted the basis put forth by England for the settlement of the questions in hand. But it is needless to say that unless that intention was held, and held firmly, the selection of the Russian Embassy as the place of meeting only aggravated in an intense degree all the objections which had been pointed out to a Conference held in her own Capital from which Turkey was excluded. It stood in natural connexion with the policy of intimating and imposing the will of Europe. If no such policy was in view it could only wound the pride of the Turks, and inspire them with incurable suspicions. At this meeting General Ignatieff urged the necessity of the temporary employment of a military force as a precaution against any outburst of Moslem fanaticism in the case of strong measures being recommended by the Con-

* Ibid., No. 42, p. 26.

ference. Lord Salisbury fought off this proposal by doubting the danger. But the representatives of the other Powers did not assent to this view of the case: and on being hard pressed on the proposal, he suggested the use of an English force, which he agreed to recommend to his Government. Russia objected, and Germany said that no troops belonging to any one of the Guaranteeing Powers could be accepted. A Belgian force was then again proposed, and Lord Salisbury "earnestly recommended adoption, because he did not believe they would give way on this, and because no possible danger could result."*

On the 15th Lord Salisbury's language and action on this occasion received the sanction of the Cabinet.† That sanction carried with it the assent of the British Government to the principle of calling in Foreign troops as the support of Foreign Administrators in the Provinces of Turkey. On the 17th Lord Salisbury reported that the "provisional discussions had terminated." The proposals were detailed, and it was intimated that the six Powers, whilst leaving room for "modifications in detail after the Turks have been heard, had agreed to adhere to general principles, and if the Turks refuse, the Plenipotentiaries would apply to their Governments to be allowed to announce that they will leave n a body."‡ "The Turks," Lord Salisbury had

* Ibid., No. 57, pp. 50, 51. † Ibid., No. 61, p. 52.
‡ Ibid., No. 63, p. 52.

said, "would probably oppose. But then," he significantly added, "this applies to all suggestions of reform." On the following day the Cabinet sanctioned the scheme "in principle"—including the employment of 6000 troops from Belgium or some other minor State; but it was added, "her Majesty's Government reserve absolutely the question of steps to be taken in the event of refusal by the Porte."* Already, it seems, the courage of the Government and the bravery of its words were beginning to faint and fail the moment any decisive resolution came in sight, and it is characteristic of this temper that on the same day an endeavour was made to abate the significance even of such steps as had been already sanctioned, and especially of the use of foreign troops. Lord Salisbury was instructed in a separate despatch to endeavour, if possible, that this measure "should appear to be made at the request of the Porte; and that it should be accompanied by some withdrawal of Russian troops from the frontier as a counterbalance"!†

At this juncture the other Powers of Europe, knowing by experience the feeble knees of the English Cabinet, began to inquire what its intentions were in the probable case of a refusal by the Porte. On the 21st of December this question was asked by France, with the significant observation that "much

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* Ibid., No. 65, p. 53. † Ibid., No. 66, p. 53.

would depend on the attitude assumed by England." The Foreign Secretary replied that the Queen's Government would undoubtedly support "to the utmost of its power the proposals made by the Plenipotentiaries;" but it was carefully explained that her Majesty's Government would not be prepared to employ measures of active coercion; whilst, on the other hand, they would not hold out to the Porte any hope of assistance or protection in the event of war ensuing on the refusal to entertain the proposals of the Powers.* On the following day, Dec. 22nd, the formal resolution of the Cabinet was communicated to Lord Salisbury, that England "would not assent to, or assist in coercive measures, military or naval, against the Porte; but the Porte, on the other hand, was to be made to understand, that it can expect no assistance from England in the event of war." These were the views of the Government, but, Lord Salisbury might use his own discretion as to the language he should hold.†

Whatever may have been the discretion of Lord Salisbury, there is good reason to believe that the Turks were duly informed of this resolution of the Government, and that they took note of it accordingly. Among the Papers presented to Parliament there is a mysterious telegram of boisterous thanks from the Porte to the Turkish Ambassador in London,

* Ibid., No. 76, p. 56. † Ibid., No. 78, p. 56.

dated December 24th. "Telegram received, No. 431, special.—I have read it to Grand Vizier. His Highness received this communication with deep gratitude, and begs you to express to his Excellency his acknowledgments. You will explain to his Lordship, in the name of the Grand Vizier, that the Sublime Porte reckons more than ever on the kind support of the Government of her Britannic Majesty under the difficult circumstances we are passing through."* In the debate in the House of Lords of Feb. 20th, 1877, it was denied that this Message of the 24th December referred to the decision of the Cabinet of the 22nd. But it appears from another paper, that so early as the 19th,† the Turks were told of the substance of that decision—namely, that England would not threaten, and did not intend to use, coercion; and it is clear, from the exuberant gratitude of the Porte, that they measured very accurately the sincerity of such diplomatic menaces as the retirement of Lord Salisbury and the withdrawal of Sir H. Elliot.

Sir H. Elliot, to do him justice, had early seen the inevitable effects of all this method of proceeding. On the 10th of December he had pointed out that if the Turks should refuse, as they very probably would do, and if war should ensue, the result would very much diminish the force of any protest which her Majesty's Government might wish to make against

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* Ibid., No. 87, p. 62. † Ibid., No 148, p. 182.

coercive measures by Russia alone.* Sir H. Elliot might have gone further. He might have pointed out that such protests would be hardly honest. It was not fair to use the threats of Russian coercion as the main argument with the Turks—and then to pretend that no such coercion was contemplated when the occasion and the necessity for it actually arose.

This double dealing on the subject of coercion very naturally displeased the other Powers of Europe. They saw that it must inevitably lead to that very war between Russia and Turkey alone, which it was the whole object of the Conference to avert. The German Emperor consequently intimated to our Ambassador at Berlin "that if pressure were not equally exercised by all the Powers, the Porte might feel encouraged to resist, and war with Russia would ensue, much to the regret of his Imperial Majesty."† In replying to this remonstrance, the English Foreign Secretary laid emphasis on the assurance that, although her Majesty's Government would not "themselves" employ measures of coercion, they would not hold out any hope of assistance to the Porte if others did so. He expressly added that his language to Count Schouvalow in the same sense "was no less explicit."

What right could the Queen's Government have

* Ibid., No. 83, p. 59. † Ibid., No. 95, p. 69.

to deny, after this, that the single action of Russia was both distinctly contemplated, and the threat of it as distinctly used for the purposes then in view?

On the 20th of December the proposals of the Preliminary Conferences were communicated privately to Midhat Pasha, who had just been appointed Grand Vizier. Lord Salisbury reported that the language of the Turkish Ministers was unsatisfactory. They protested strongly againstthe appointment of an International Commission, "and indeed objected to any form of guarantee except the promise of the Sultan."*

The proceedings which followed are so curious, and so eminently dramatic, that it may be well to give them in some detail.

There had been nine meetings of the Preliminary Conference—all held at the Russian Embassy. The last took place on the 22nd December, 1876. The Russian Ambassador took care to intimate on that occasion that the bases of peace then agreed upon were those initiated by the Cabinet of London. This agreement had only been rendered possible by reciprocal concessions. These concessions, so far as he was concerned, had reached their farthest limit. The result of the meetings was, for Russia, "the extreme and irreducible minimum" of the demands which she thought it equitable and indispensable to claim in favour of the Christians of the East. It was a

* Ibid., No. 110, p. 89.

result which no longer represented the wishes of any one Power. "It was the common work of united Europe."*

In the meantime the Porte had been asked to appoint a day for the first meeting of the "Full" Conference to which Turkey herself was to be admitted. Hitherto that Government had been kept waiting till a meeting of Plenipotentiaries of other Powers sitting in the Sultan's own Capital, should please to announce to him what those Plenipotentiaries considered necessary for the reform of his administration. That nothing might be wanted to wound the pride, and excite the obstinacy of the Turks, these meetings had been held, as we have seen, in the House of their ancient hereditary foe. And then, farther, as if to offer the greatest possible encouragement and the freest scope to the natural feelings of a haughty race under such circumstances of provocation, England, the strongest of the Powers thus assembled, had announced beforehand that she would not attempt coercion, but would leave Russia alone to do so.

It was under these circumstances that the Porte had named the 23rd of December as the day on which the "Full" Conference might meet.

The Turks had their turn now, and well did they turn it to account.

The Presidency was assigned to Safvet Pasha, the

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* Turkey, II., 1877, p. 169.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Ottoman Empire. He opened the proceedings by reading a long paper setting forth the previous history of the insurrections and of the negotiations. Its tone was in sharp contrast with the tone of those earlier manifestos of the Porte, when as yet the Turks did not know the weakness of the Powers, as arising out of the attitude of the English Cabinet, and when confessions of mal-administration had been prudently mingled with promises of reform. There was no longer now any admission of sins,—any expression of repentance. The Turks had been from the beginning the injured party. The advice of England, so often urged, that the Porte should suppress the insurrection more speedily was specially alluded to. "Notwithstanding the repeated advice which came from different quarters, the Imperial Government would not make immoderate use of the superiority of their forces against their misguided subjects." The Bulgarian massacres were then in part denied, in part defended. The insurrection had been suppressed without the effusion of blood which had been pretended. "It was indeed wonderful that so formidable a movement could have been suppressed and completely annihilated in so short a time, and without having had more losses to complain of." The Imperial Government had since done everything that a wise and humane government could do to accomplish the work of reparation. All Europe owed a debt of gratitude to the firmness and

moderation of Turkey in overpowering Revolutionary conspiracies. In doing so she had given incontestable proofs of her vitality, and rendered a marked service to the general cause of order.

At the close of this insolent harangue, the British Plenipotentiary was moved to enter a mild protest against the correctness of the observations on the events which had taken place in Bulgaria. The Russian Plenipotentiary seconded this protest. The Austro-Hungarian Representative did the same. The French Plenipotentiary then made a general declaration in the name of the six guaranteeing Powers, and communicated formally to the representatives of Turkey the Report of the results arrived at by those Powers in the Preliminary Conferences.

The Turks received this Report with every expression of courteous and innocent surprise. What could have induced the Powers to take so much kindly interest in the internal concerns of Turkey? or, looking at it from another point of view—what could have induced them to hatch in the capital of the Sultan such a serious conspiracy against her independence? The causes and the reasons for such an unusual proceeding were quite unknown to them. But no doubt those reasons had been prepared and would be produced.

Accordingly one of the Turkish Plenipotentiaries asked whether the Report was accompanied by a Statement of Reasons?

To this Lord Salisbury replied that the Report was founded on the basis presented by England.

The French Representative added that it was founded also on all the previous documents connected with the subject as well as on the notes exchanged between the Powers.

The Austro-Hungarian Representative said that the leading points of the Report were to be found in the Andrassy Note, which had been accepted by the whole of Europe.

The Italian Plenipotentiary made the significant observation that the principal motive of it was to be found in the "gravity of the situation," which in diplomatic phraseology means the necessities of the case.

But the Turks had prepared for the Plenipotentiaries a new surprise. They had already asked for reasons. The Powers had thus been told with tolerable plainness that their labours were an impertinence. They were now to be told, in a dramatic form, that their labours were as needless as they were impertinent.

"At this moment," says the Protocol of the First Full Conference, "salvoes of artillery are heard."

Safvet Pasha rises and explains that these salvoes announce the promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution. "A great act," said the Turkish President- "which is at this moment being accomplished, has just changed a form of government which has lasted

six hundred years. The Constitution with which his Majesty the Sultan has endowed his empire is promulgated. It inaugurates a new era for the happiness and prosperity of his people."

The French Plenipotentiary then ventured to point out that the agreement of all the Powers in the Conference was an essential condition for the efficacy of this solemn act.

Lord Salisbury made the gentle observation that the Conference had met to secure peace.

Safvet Pasha said that Turkey desired peace in order to be able to realise the benefits of her new Constitution.

The Russian Ambassador intimated that the application of the new Institutions would be the real test of their value.

And so ended the first act of a very solemn farce.*

It is remarkable that at this juncture the British Plenipotentiary gave a significant indication of the effect produced by the presence of the British Fleet in Besika Bay. The weather made it an unpleasant anchorage in mid-winter; and the Admiral in command thought it necessary to seek a safer anchorage. Lord Salisbury took advantage of the occasion to request that the Fleet should not go to Salonica but to Athens. He made the request "to avoid misconstruction," and to give some support to his assertion

* Ibid., p. 228–9.

that the Turks were to expect no assistance* from her Majesty's Government. It is a pity this consideration had not been thought of sooner, when the recollection of it might have been yet in time.

On the 26th of December Lord Salisbury had a long audience of the Sultan, in the course of which he endeavoured to convey to the Turkish Sovereign "the deep abhorrence which had been excited in England by the crimes committed in Bulgaria," and he urged farther the regret and indignation with which the impunity of the chief offenders had been viewed in England. Lord Salisbury might have spared himself the trouble. He found the full conviction in the Sultan's mind to be "that the alienation of a large portion of the English people was due rather to the repudiation of the Turkish debt than to the atrocities in Bulgaria."†

The feebleness of purpose in the English Cabinet had now been felt; and the Turks knew it well. On the 4th of January, 1877, the Turkish Ambassador brought a special Envoy from the Porte to the Foreign Office, with a letter from the new Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha. This Envoy, Odian Pasha addressed the Secretary of State at considerable length, justifying the refusal by his Sovereign of the proposals of the Powers—a refusal which he spoke of as a foregone conclusion. The English Foreign

* Turkey, II., 1877, No. 89, p. 65.
† Ibid., No. 138, p. 174.

Secretary had recourse to his usual argument—that England had proposed the Conference as a means of averting war between Russia and Turkey. "It was for the Porte to consider whether it was not in the interest of Turkey to make the proposed concessions to avoid such an eventuality." To this the Turkish Envoy replied that "Turkey had now 600,000 men under arms, and they were not afraid to face a campaign with Russia, if it became necessary."*

It is worth while to look for a moment at the language held by Russia at this time. We shall find that it was language expressive of an anxious desire not to be placed in the position of being sole executrix of the will of Europe. Whether this language was sincere or not, it was for the Powers, and for England especially, to take her at her word. In the sitting of the Preliminary Conference held on the 20th December, General Ignatieff had urged that the proposals should be presented to the Porte "backed by the identic, and, if necessary, menacing attitude of the whole of Europe." He then read the following telegram from the Russian Chancellor:—

"The Emperor is unshaken in his determination for an effective and palpable improvement in the lot of the Christians in the three provinces on the basis accepted by all the Cabinets. The Imperial Government does not doubt that the Christian Representa-

* Ibid., No. 131, p. 138.

tives will feel themselves bound to impose on the Porte, by firm and unanimous language, a frank acceptance of the common proposals. It hopes they will not lose sight of the grave responsibility which devolves upon them before history and before humanity."*

The second meeting of the Conference took place on the 28th December. The Turkish method of proceeding is best described in the words of Lord Salisbury: "The Turkish Plenipotentiaries took everything *ad referendum*, but they raised objections to each point of the proposals,—(1) to the mode of appointing governors, (2) to their tenure of office for five years, (3) to their irremovability except on judicial sentence, (4) to the cantonment of the troops in fortresses and great towns, (5) to the division of the provinces, (6) to the commission of supervision, (7) to the gendarmerie, (8) to the regulations as to justice and finance, and (9) to the rectification of frontier."† This was precisely the tactics which had already been explained by the Porte, and to which it had warned the English Government it would resort in the event of a Conference being called.

On the 1st of January, 1877, on which day the fourth meeting of the Conference was held, the Turkish Plenipotentiaries announced that they had

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* Ibid., No. 135, Inclos. 3, p. 147.
† Ibid., No. 141, p. 175.

no instructions even to discuss any one of the nine points above enumerated.*

After the close of this sitting Lord Salisbury called upon the Grand Vizier, and urged upon him the dangers to which Turkey would be exposed by a persistence in this course. He pointed out that Turkey stood absolutely alone. He reminded him of the fatal events of 1827-8. He hinted at concessions on some of the points. Midhat Pasha was firm, and firm, too, on the one essential point. It was not so much the substance of the proposals, as the entering into an engagement to carry them out.†

In the grave position which affairs had now assumed, the British Plenipotentiary thought it expedient to embody in a formal despatch his explanation and defence of the proposals of the Powers. It is a well-reasoned and able paper, but contains nothing deserving of special remark, unless it be the paragraph which deals with the objection that the demand of the Powers was inconsistent with the independence of the Porte. This argument calls forth from Lord Salisbury the following passage: "The independence of the Ottoman Porte is a phrase which is, of course, capable of different interpretations. At the present time it must be interpreted so as to be consistent with the joint military and diplomatic action taken in recent years by the

* Ibid., No. 162, p. 197. † Ibid., No. 163, p. 198.

Powers who signed the Treaty of Paris. If the Porte had been independent in the sense in which the guaranteeing Powers are independent, it would not have stood in need of a guarantee. The military sacrifices made by the two Western Powers twenty years ago saved it from destruction, and the Conference which is now being held to avert an analogous danger would have been an unnecessary interference if Turkey had been a Power which did not depend on the protection of others for its existence."*

A reply not less judicious, and certainly equally obvious, was given in this Paper to the objection that the proposals of the Powers were conceived in the interests of Russia. "Those who think," says Lord Salisbury, "that any diminution of the authority of the central Government, however essential to an improved administration, would be favourable to the assumed designs of Russia, will, of course, find a Russian character in the propositions that have been submitted to the Porte. A sounder view, however, appears to me to be, that in proportion as the good government and consequent contentment of these provinces increase, the less inclined will they be to change their allegiance. Many territories have been added to Russia during the last century, but in no instance have the additions been brought about by any desire on the part of the inhabitants for incor-

* Ibid., No. 167, p. 213.

poration into the Russian Empire. There is no ground in history, therefore, for the belief that a grant of practical self-government to the Bulgarian provinces would develop any such desire in the population. It is probable that the movements which have recently taken place in Bulgaria, and have been so terribly repressed, are due in part to agitators of Russian nationality. But such intrigues derive their power, not from any ethnological sentiment, nor from a distant relationship of languages, but from the profound misgovernment under which the inhabitants have suffered." This is indeed wise and thoughtful language, and stands out in refreshing contrast with the weak conventionalities of our Ambassadorial and Consular Agents in Turkey.

The Powers now once more agreed to abate their terms, and to offer several modifications on the proposals they had made. Russia, with a wise moderation, determined to maintain her concert with the other Powers, and therefore agreed to reduce her "irreducible minimum." On the 13th January these modified proposals were assented to by the British Government. On the 26th of January Lord Salisbury tried once more his powers of personal persuasion. He called on the Grand Vizier, and held with him a long conversation on the mitigated proposal of the Powers. But he met with no response. Midhat Pasha showed no disposition to yield on any one of the essential points. He would

not hear of the appointment of a Commission having Foreigners upon it. Nor would he allow of European interference in the appointment of Governors. Nor would he suffer the association of Christians with Mussulmans in the Militia. He was willing to grant an amnesty, provided it was so arranged as to include the murderers of the women and children of Batak.*

We know now on the highest authority what were the influences under which the Porte acted in this contemptuous refusal of the advice of Europe. Midhat Pasha has since explained them in a Paper communicated to the *Nineteenth Century* Review of June, 1878. In that Paper he says, "Turkey was not unaware of the attitude of the English Government towards her; the British Cabinet had declared in clear terms that it would not interfere in our dispute. This decision of the English Cabinet was perfectly well known to us, but we knew still better that the general interests of Europe and the particular interests of England were so bound up in our dispute with Russia that in spite of all the Declarations of the English Cabinet it appeared to us to be absolutely impossible for her to avoid interfering sooner or later in this Eastern dispute. This profound belief, added to the reasons we have mentioned, was one of the principal factors of our

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* Ibid., No. 220, p. 301-2.

contest with Russia."* It will be observed that in this passage the Ex-Grand Vizier speaks of the dispute then pending in the Conference as essentially a dispute not between Turkey and Europe, but between Turkey and Russia. This was the natural and inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the whole conduct and language of the English Cabinet. Even at this eleventh, or twelfth hour, there might have been time to remove this impression by a more firm and manly tone, and by the announcement of a corresponding policy. The defiant answer of Midhat to the British Plenipotentiary on the 26th January, 1877, might have afforded an opportunity not even yet too late. It might have been expected that such haughtiness on the part of the Turks would have been met with some corresponding exhibition of firmness on the part of all the Powers. But, on the contrary, in proportion as the tone of the Turks became more and more resolute and defiant, the tone of the English Cabinet became more and more timid. It was evident that the decisive moment was approaching, and in view of it Lord Salisbury was specially desired "to avoid all appearance of menace that can be construed as pledging her Majesty's Government to enforce the proposals at a later date."†

It was, under these circumstances, well known to

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*Nineteenth Century*, No. 16, June, 1878, p. 987-8.

† Turkey, II., No. 188, p. 261.

the Porte, that at a meeting of the Plenipotentiaries of the six Powers, held on the 12th of January, it was decided to present the modified proposals at the next meeting of the Conference, accompanied by a declaration that if the principles of the propositions were not accepted, the Representatives would consider the Conference as at an end, and would leave Constantinople, in accordance with their several instructions.*

On the 15th of January, at the Conference in which these proposals were submitted to the Porte, they were resolutely refused by the Turks. There were two things retained in those proposals, neither of which could be admitted—the Governors with independent tenure, and the International Commission. A telegraphic message was sent to the Turkish Ambassador in London, communicated on the 16th to the Foreign Secretary, in which the proposal of the Powers was denounced as "an insulting proposal, and the mutilation of the Empire."†

On this occasion the British Plenipotentiary made a remarkable speech. He declared that, although no right of interference in the internal administration of Turkey "was established by Article IX. of the Treaty of Paris, nevertheless the engagements of that Treaty were not and could not be unilateral."

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* Ibid., No. 221, p. 302. † Ibid., No. 192, pp. 262, 263.

This declaration, it will be seen, agrees with the interpretation of the Treaty which has been maintained in a previous chapter. The meaning of that Article was that Turkey was to be entrusted with the fulfilment of her own promises. But these promises were, not the less, engagements given to Europe, and if they were violated Europe was free and had a right to act accordingly.

Having asserted this doctrine, Lord Salisbury went on to say that the Sultan was expected to listen to the disinterested advice of the Powers, who had guaranteed his Empire, and who had maintained its integrity and independence by means of the well-known sacrifices made by some of them. If the Conference should break up because Turkey would not listen to the counsels of the six guaranteeing Powers her position before Europe will have been completely changed, and would be extremely perilous. It was further declared that not only would there be a change of feeling, but a change of duty. The conviction would arise in Europe that "she can no longer relieve herself of the responsibility imposed upon her by the efforts she has made for the protection of Turkey." These are true words, and they would have been brave words if they had been uttered with the slightest intention of acting on the principles they expressed. But, unfortunately, there was no such intention. The speaker, instead of going on to say that England would act upon the responsibility which he declared to be imposed upon

her as one of the Great Powers of Europe and as a principal agent in the transactions out of which that responsibility arose, went on to say that England would "relieve herself of that responsibility," and would leave it to others to act upon it. England would not protect Turkey if Russia chose to act on the responsibility which had just been declared to belong to all. But England would do nothing herself. The usual formulæ of expression were employed to indicate that member of the European family to which the duty was to be left, and on which the burden was to be laid. "The Porte should now consider the injurious consequences that may result from such a change in the public opinion of Europe. We can foresee dangers near at hand which will threaten the very existence of Turkey if she allows herself to be entirely isolated. It is my duty to free her Majesty's Government of all responsibility for what may happen, and I am therefore instructed to declare formally that Great Britain is resolved not to give her sanction either to maladministration or to oppression, and that if the Porte, from obstinacy or inactivity, offers resistance to the efforts now being made to place the Ottoman Empire on a more sure basis, the responsibility of the consequences will rest solely on the Sultan and his advisers."* Lord Salisbury, in conclusion, announced that if the principles of the modified

* Ibid., No. 230, Inclos. 2, p. 362.

proposals were not accepted at the next Conference, which was to be held on the 18th January, the Representatives of the six Powers would leave Constantinople.

It is only fair towards Turkey to admit that the proposals of the Powers, even in their ultimate and most modified form, were such as no Government could admit, if it pretended to real and substantial independence, and if any choice were left to it in the matter. These proposals were incompatible with the claim of independence. They involved foreign interference and foreign supervision. It was, therefore, in the highest degree futile to suppose that they could be submitted to except under compulsion. Accordingly, we have seen that no such supposition was really entertained. Compulsion was threatened and was relied upon for success. But it was to be compulsion at the cost of one Power alone out of the many which joined in menace. Bad as the cause of the Turks was on its own merits, it must be confessed that their position in defending it was that of dignity itself when compared with the position of the English Cabinet.

On the 20th January the Conference sat for the last time. The Russian Ambassador read a protest which was couched in decisive language, but which Lord Salisbury thought indicated that war was not probable unless further provocation were given by Turkey.*

* Ibid., No. 229, p. 344.

The English Plenipotentiary contented himself with saying, in the course of a short speech, "that it was not to record projects of improvement that the Conference of the Powers had met in Constantinople. Its task was to establish administrative autonomy and effective guarantees. As soon as a refusal to grant those has been duly recorded its mission is completed, and its existence can no longer be prolonged."*

The last words of the British Plenipotentiary were in reply to the President, Safvet Pasha, who insisted on the "excellent intentions of the Ottoman Government." These last words are important, because they went directly to the main issue then at stake. Lord Salisbury replied to Safvet that "the Porte had only given promises and refused to give guarantees." It was on this that the Powers insisted. It was on this that the Conference was broken up.

On the 22nd January, 1877, Lord Salisbury left Constantinople, and Sir H. Elliot followed on the 25th.

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Ibid., No. 230, Inclos., p. 375.

## CHAPTER VIII.

REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT AND CONDITION OF TURKEY DURING THE YEAR FROM THE BULGARIAN MASSACRES IN MAY, 1876, TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR BY RUSSIA IN APRIL, 1877.

IN the review of the proceedings of the Conference at Constantinople which has occupied the last chapter, I have not stopped to discuss the merits or the practicability of the particular scheme of reform proposed by the Powers. Much might be said on this subject, but nothing really depends upon it. No scheme could possibly be devised which was not open to great objections and encompassed with many difficulties, so long as the Ottoman Government was kept up at all. But no objections of this kind, and no difficulties of this nature, had any share in determining the resistance of the Porte, nor have they any connexion with what may be justly open to blame in the conduct of the British Government. No active opposition in Parliament or in the country to that conduct would have been justified by probabilities, however great, as to the unworkable nature of the practical pro-

posals of the Powers. This is the sphere within which the Executive Government of the Queen must always be trusted, and ought to be trusted, to do its best. I believe that a simpler plan would have been better. The single measure of securing the appointment, and the irremovable character of good Governors over the provinces, would probably have been enough, at least for a time. On this subject I am disposed to agree in the opinion expressed long before by Consul Holmes in his comment of October 26th, on the scheme of Turkish reforms.* But this is a question quite beside the main issues on which the Conference was defeated by the Turks. Securities for the appointment and for the tenure of good Governors was one of the main conditions of the scheme actually proposed, and it was precisely one of those which was most obnoxious to the inveterate corruption and tyranny of the Turks.

The defeat of the Conference is not, therefore, to be regarded merely as the rejection of any particular scheme which may have been more or less open to objection. It is to be regarded as a defeat and defiance of the Powers of Europe in their claim to interfere at all in the administration of the Turkish Empire. Acquiescence in that defeat and submission to that defiance on the part of Europe, meant the unconditional deliverance of the subject-populations

* Turkey, I., 1877, No. 881, Inclos., p. 601.

to the corrupt tyranny against which they had revolted. That tyranny was certain to be intensified, and rendered even more intolerable than before by the inflated pride of the Turks due to such a triumph over the Powers. Nothing therefore could justify such a course on the part of Europe, unless, indeed, there were some reasonable ground for hoping and believing not only that the Porte was sincere in its promises of reform, but that its agents were already exhibiting some earnestness and some power in carrying these promises into effect. If, on the contrary, there was no ground for any such hope or belief, but rather abundant evidence that the Turkish Government was as bad as ever,—then the course of simply acquiescing in the defeat of the Congress, was a shameful and humiliating abandonment of duty.

It is of importance, therefore, to review the evidence afforded on this subject by the transactions which had taken place subsequent to the massacres in Bulgaria, during the sittings of the Congress itself, and during the months which elapsed between the failure of the Congress and the beginning of the war with Russia.

When in July and early in August, 1876, Sir H. Elliot was made aware from Mr. Baring's first reports that the Bulgarian cruelties had been "carried on upon a scale fully sufficient to justify the indignation they had called forth,"* and that

* Ibid., No. 220, p. 142.

as Mr. Baring expressed it, crimes had been committed, "the most heinous that had stained the history of the present century," he began to urge upon the Porte the inferences which would arise if the authors of those massacres were left unpunished. On the 9th of August he said in writing to the Foreign Secretary, "It was asserted by the Porte that the excesses had been committed by the Mussulman populations of the neighbourhood, whom the Government had no more power to restrain in an internecine war than they had over the insurgents who were the first to begin them, but what, I asked (of the Turkish Minister, Safvet Pasha), must be thought of the Government which, while continuing to punish all accused of complicity in the insurrection, took no pains whatever to punish those on the other side who had been guilty of acts which were a disgrace to any country, and had even rewarded some who were accused of being the chief actors in them?"* And in a written memorandum dated August 5th, addressed to the same Turkish Minister, our Ambassador had repeated the same question, "What will be said throughout the whole civilised world when it is known that the authors of all these horrors have not only not been punished, but that they have been rewarded and decorated by the Turkish Government?"†

The ferocity with which the Turkish authorities conducted the trial and punishment of the Bulgarians

* Ibid., No. 39, p. 28. † Ibid., Inclos. 3, p. 31.

who were accused of having taken part in the insurrection, long after the complete suppression of resistance, added force to these significant questions of the British Ambassador. Every iniquity which could be perpetrated under the name of justice was perpetrated by the Turks. Vice-Consul Dupuis, writing from Adrianople on the 9th of July, says calmly, "Judicial torture, as your Excellency is aware, is a common practice in connexion with judicial proceedings now going on against Bulgarian political prisoners;"* and on the 19th of August he gave, as an example, one detailed case of torture to which a Bulgarian priest of the village of Peshtara had been subjected in order to procure confessions.†

On the 6th of September, Acting-Consul Calvert at Philippopolis reported that this practice had been frequent, and that even so late as that date many prisoners were kept in confinement for no other purpose than than of extorting money from their friends and relations.‡ This is apparently an habitual source of income, in all such cases, to the officers of Turkish justice —and well illustrates the truth of an assertion made about this time by Mr. Consul Holmes in respect to the administration of Bosnia, that the insufficient pay of all Turkish functionaries, "instead of offering any inducement to act justly and conscientiously, almost necessitates arbitrary, oppressive, and corrupt conduct

* Turkey, V., 1876, No. 20, Inclos. p. 17.

† Ibid., No. 95, p. 75. ‡ Ibid., No. 334, Inclos. 1, p. 254.

to all in authority as a means of living and preserving their positions."*

At last, on the 17th September, the Porte was shamed into the appointment of a Commission to go into Bulgaria, invested with full powers to try and punish such of the Bashi-Bazouk leaders, and persons in authority as might be found guilty of the crimes laid to their charge. The Commission was to consist of eight persons—one-half Turks and one-half Christians. Of this commission Mr. Sandison (Dragoman of the Embassy) reported with very proper caution—not that it consisted of, but—that it "included" "men who, it was believed, would do their duty."† Sir Henry Elliot, however, very wisely determined to send Mr. Baring to be present at the proceedings of the Commission, that "his presence might strengthen the position of such of the Commissioners as might wish to resist attempts on the part of others to attenuate the facts or to shelter the guilty."‡ Mr. Sandison observed, however, that in the presence of the armed Mussulman population of the district of Philippopolis it was not easy to see how far the Commission could venture to act with firmness and severity, unless it were supported by an efficient military force. Sir H. Elliot accordingly recommended to the Porte that sufficient regular troops should be sent at once to Philippopolis. But the Grand Vizier declined to follow this advice.§

* Ibid., No. 391, Inclos. p. 310. † Ibid., No. 489, Inclos. p. 372.
‡ Ibid. § Ibid., No. 490, pp. 373, 374.

On his arrival at Philippopolis, Mr. Baring saw at once the real condition of things. Not one of those who had committed the atrocities was in prison. Two causes only could account for this, either the authorities were afraid of a Mussulman outbreak; or else they were afraid of the revelations which might be made by the leaders of the Bashi-Bazouks as to the instructions from head-quarters under which they had acted in their dealings with the Christian villages. If the Porte were really in earnest they would send a force of three thousand men. At present the position of the Christians in the province was "simply intolerable."*

On the 5th of October Mr. Baring reported on his first experience of the new Commission. At the village of Peshtara he heard their version of the massacre of Batak; and as indicating the reliance to be placed on this story of the past, he heard their impression of the condition of things then existing—namely, that wonderfully good relations existed between the Mussulmans and Christians. Mr. Baring was obliged to characterise this statement of the Commission as "one of the most audacious he had ever heard." "I do not wish to prejudge the case," adds Mr. Baring, "but I cannot help thinking, from remarks which fall from the Mussulman members of the Commission, that they intend to absolve Achmet

* Ibid., No. 571, Inclos. 3, p. 432.

Agha from all guilt."* Fear sealed the lips of the Bulgarian witnesses; and the method of inquiry pursued by the Commission sufficiently evinced the purpose in view.

On the 8th October Mr. Baring felt constrained to make a most important explanation in respect to one passage of his report on the Bulgarian massacres. He had ascribed the revolt to the work of "foreign" agitators and emissaries. He desired now to explain that the principal men concerned were all Bulgarians by birth, but had lived many years in Roumania and Servia: it was true they came from abroad, but as regarded Bulgaria they should not be called foreigners. He had never intended to convey the impression that *bonâ fide* foreigners took an active part in the revolt.†

Considering that the liberties of England were secured by the help of foreigners, and that "intrigues" with them formed a principal part of the work done by the patriots who brought about the Revolution, it does not seem very intelligible why it should be thought a fatal condemnation of insurrections against the Turks, that they have been aided and abetted by foreigners. English officials in Turkey like Consul Holmes are never weary of repeating this charge. It is satisfactory, therefore, that as regards the rising in Bulgaria, Mr.

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* Ibid., No. 733, Inclos. 1, p. 522.
† Ibid., No. 734, Inclos. 526.

Baring thus puts the facts in their true light. The "foreigners" were natives who had become accustomed to liberty in lands free from the Turks: and they were the natural leaders of their countrymen in their attempts to throw off the Moslem yoke.

On the 24th of October the English Foreign Secretary took official notice of these accounts from Mr. Baring, as showing that the Commission did not promise to be of real service, and Sir H. Elliot was desired once more to remonstrate with the Porte.*

On the 21st October Sir H. Elliot denounced the conduct both of the Government and of the Commission in an interview with the Grand Vizier. "Months," he said, "had elapsed since persons had been pointed out as having been guilty of the most frightful excesses, and still we found them—as in the case of Chefket Pasha—retained in posts of honour, without a step being taken to ascertain his guilt or to establish his innocence." As to the Commission, "Mr. Baring's reports showed that in conducting its inquiries it was more desirous of favouring the accused than of eliciting the truth."†

On the 30th of October Mr. Baring had to report again on the proceedings of the Turkish Commission. Six weeks had elapsed since it left Constantinople, and "it was a surprising fact that it had not yet decided whether the Batak massacre was a crime or

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* Ibid., No. 761, p. 534. † Ibid., No. 847, p. 581.

not." Six months had elapsed since the suppression of the revolt, and about a hundred persons had been hanged, in addition to the thousands massacred. Nor had the Commission done much better as an administrative than as a judicial body. For inquiring into the loss of property and providing for the rebuilding of houses it had appointed, in some cases, men of the worst character. One of these was a man whom Mr. Baring describes as "having fattened on the spoils of the Bulgarian villages—one who surpassed even the other Turks of his notorious village in vindictiveness, licentiousness, and dishonesty." His appointment to a post of trust Mr. Baring denounced as "a disgrace to the Commission."*

Again, in consequence of this report, Sir H. Elliot remonstrated with the Porte, and condemned as "illusory" the proceedings of the Commission.† He even threatened to recall Mr. Baring from Philippopolis, as he was not disposed to appear to countenance the doings of the Commission by the presence of a member of her Majesty's Embassy. But Sir H. Elliot's remonstrances and threats were alike estimated at their proper value by the Porte. On the 22nd November that Government replied to him by a most insolent assertion that his complaints were groundless, and by a positive counter-assertion that the working of the Commission was perfectly satisfac-

* Ibid., No. 992, Inclos. 1, p. 669. † Ibid., No. 993, p. 671.

tory. "In a word," said this Memorandum of the Turkish Government, "the Commission is doing its work so speedily that nothing further can be desired."*

Whilst such evidence as this was being given in the face of Europe of the desire of the Turkish Government to do justice in the matter of the Bulgarian massacres, evidence hardly less conclusive was afforded to the Queen's Government as to the hopefulness of those reforms which were promised for the future. That evidence came from no other than Consul Holmes. On the 26th of October he addressed to Sir H. Elliot a despatch on the project of the reforms which the Grand Council had decided upon as applicable to the whole Empire, and which was announced as a full and sufficient substitute for all the guarantees which were being demanded by the Powers. The new organisation offered to the whole Turkish Empire was one which, besides the higher elements of a popular elective Assembly and a Senate, rested as a basis on "a local control, to be exercised by the mixed Medjlisses or local Councils of Vilayets (or departments), and Sandjaks (or districts), which at present exist in the provinces." Consul Holmes proceeds to demolish this basis as one of any hope for the future, and in doing so he lays bare the roots of the disaffection which he had so often attributed to foreign agitation. "Now it is precisely these Medjlisses which, in the provinces, are

* Ibid. No. 1082, Inclos. 3, p. 751.

the obstacles to all reform; and as far as lies in my power, I anxiously desire to impress on your Excellency the utter futility of hoping any good from any proposals in which these Councils are concerned. The fallacy of the idea that these countries can be benefited by a control exercised by these mixed Medjlisses is evident to any one who knows of what they are composed—viz., the most influential but fanatic, ignorant, and corrupt of the Mussulman population, and of the most insignificant of the Christians. If the Christians were even in the proportion of three to one, the Mahometan minority would still have its own way. The more enlightened of the Christians, the so-called merchants, with hardly the capital and not the intelligence and education of a small shopkeeper in an English village, have not the courage to sit in a Council in which they know they would have no influence, and dread being molested and injured in their affairs if they spoke a word in opposition to their Moslem colleagues." He goes on to explain and illustrate their position, and declares that against the predominant influence and corrupt authority of these local Councils, the higher Turkish officials, the Governors-General, even if they were willing, and against their own personal interests, were unable to check the evils complained of. "Imperial edicts," he says, "are regarded simply as waste paper, only issued to throw dust in the eyes of Europe." Under the new organisation the Mussulman element was always

to be the majority, and was the element which had always refused to admit either the possibility or the necessity of any of the reforms proposed for the Christians. Not in Bosnia only, but all over the Turkish empire, at Monastir, Erzeroum, Kars, Trebizonde, Diarbeker, Aleppo, and Damascus, Consul Holmes declared his own personal observation to be that these local Councils were the bane of the administration, and the insurmountable obstacle to reform. "And yet the Porte proposed to confide the control of its new organisation to these local Councils."*

On the 24th of November, a despatch was addressed by her Majesty's Government to Lord Salisbury denouncing the conduct of the Commission at Philippopolis. "The few members of it," says the despatch, "who have shown any capacity for judicial investigation have been checked and hindered by the interruptions of their colleagues, and months after the massacre of hundreds of women and children and of unarmed men, the Commissioners are still considering whether such murders are crimes."†

On the 15th of December the Government received from Sir H. Elliot a scheme for the administration of Bulgaria which had been drawn up by a Secretary of the Russian Embassy, in concert with Mr. Schuyler.

* Ibid., No. 881, Inclos. pp. 601, 602.
† Turkey, II., 1877, No. 18, p. 15.

It is substantially in accord with General Ignatieff's scheme. It was accompanied by a memorandum from Mr. Baring, in which the following remarkable passage occurs:—"It does not require a long residence in this province to discover that the condition of the Christians is well-nigh intolerable, the greatest wrong of which they have to complain being, of course, the abominable administration of justice by the local tribunals. Since the special Commission has been sitting in this town, two cases have come before it, which would sufficiently prove, if fresh proof were needed, what little chance a Christian has of obtaining justice against a Mussulman. In the first of these cases, the local Court gave a decision which practically legalised forced labour, and in the second, the plaintiff was ordered to call a perfectly unnecessary witness, who the Court well knew could not possibly be produced. The Commission reversed both of these, but there is not always a special Commission sitting.

"If a Christian be accused of crime, he is held guilty till he can prove his innocence; if, on the other hand, a Mussulman be accused of crime, he is held innocent till he is proved guilty.

"All the other wrongs of which the Christians complain, such as the unfair collection of taxes, the exactions of Zaptieh and other officials, sink into insignificance when compared to this great evil, for without a proper administration of justice,

how can there be the smallest security for life or property?"*

It is often said that the Turkish law is good enough, if only it were administered honestly. It throws some light on this assertion when we read in Mr. Baring's report of this date, that when he complained of the abduction of girls by the Turks, he was told that by Turkish law a man could not be punished for carrying off a woman provided he married her.† Considering what the ceremony of marriage may be in Turkey this law is simply a law legalising rape.

It is needless to follow in great detail the farther proceedings of the Commission. Such as it was from the beginning, such it continued to the end. There was indeed one change which is characteristic of the management of Turks. Originally, the Commission was equally divided between Mohammedan and Christian members. Very early, however, one of the Christian members resigned—under what influences is not explained. At a later period another of the Christian members was appointed to a separate duty, and ceased practically to be able to attend the Commission. The British Ambassador complained, but was met as usual by falsehoods and evasions. The Christian members of the body were therefore

* Ibid., No. 50, Inclos. 3, p. 31.
† Ibid., No. 53, Inclos. 4, p. 39.

reduced to two, and although these two seem to have performed their duties with at least some show, and perhaps some reality of spirit, they were in a hopeless minority, and were outvoted on every important occasion on which they were needed to represent the interests of justice.

Although it was not intended that the British Plenipotentiaries to the Conference should interfere in the ordinary business of the Embassy, yet this matter was deemed so important, that Lord Salisbury, as we have seen, was specially instructed to remonstrate with the Turkish Government on the conduct of the Commission.

Urged at last by the continued remonstrances of the Powers, the Commission—not, however, till the 11th December—began the trial of the officers accused of the massacre of Batak. Every obstruction was put in the way of this trial by Ismael Bey, one of the Mohammedan members of the Commission, who at this juncture acted as a special Representative of the Porte, since this functionary was sent direct from Constantinople with instructions. Sir Henry Elliot reported, with much simplicity, that his conduct must have been in open defiance of the wishes of the Imperial Government.* Accordingly, as usual, he made "the strongest representations to Midhat and Safvet Pashas." The evidence against Achmet

* Ibid., No. 104, p. 77.

Agha was so overwhelming that at last the Commission, by a majority of five to one, condemned this wretch to death. But the sentence had hardly been pronounced when the President of the Commission, "fearing the displeasure of the Porte," wished to revoke the decision. Sir H. Elliot at once sent a letter to the Grand Vizier, reporting this "most distressing news," and threatening that if this course was pursued he must recall Mr. Baring.*

The capital sentences pronounced by the Commission were never carried into execution. Some of the most prominent malefactors among the Bashi-Bazouks were rewarded with employments in the public service, whilst the few brave and humane Turks who had resisted these miscreants, were visited with the displeasure of the Government.

It must be remembered that all this was in strict accordance with the spirit displayed, and the language held by the highest authorities of the Turkish Government. We have seen that at the sitting of the Conference on the 23rd December, the first Turkish Plenipotentiary had gone out of his way to praise the manner in which the Bulgarian Insurrection had been suppressed, and had declared "that it was a matter of astonishment that a revolt so formidable had been suppressed and entirely annihilated in so short a time, and without having more losses to complain of."†

* Ibid., No. 174, Inclos. 2, p. 249.
† Ibid., No. 168, Inclos. 1, p. 223.

Considering the stage on which this speech was uttered, and the audience to whom it was addressed,—an audience representing not only Europe, but the civilised world,—it is, at least, a splendid example of audacity on the part of the Turks, and an equally significant comment on the real position of those who pretend to expect real reforms from them.

At last, on the 7th of February, the patience even of the British Embassy was exhausted, and the termination of any connexion with the Commission at Philippopolis was announced to the Government at home in the following telegram, from Mr. Jocelyn :—"Baring telegraphs that the Commission has acquitted Tossoun Bey, in spite of conclusive evidence of his guilt, by a majority of four Mussulman and two Christian members. I have consequently directed him to withdraw, and as the important trials are now ended, to return here. I have made strong representation to the Porte on the subject."*

This course of conduct on the part of the Turkish Government with reference to the trial of the leaders of the Bashi-Bazouks in the massacres of May, 1876, is undoubtedly the most signal proof of the bad faith of the Turkish Government, and of the incurable vices of their administration. But it did not stand alone. The conduct of the Porte at this time, in respect to the resettlement of the provinces which had been

* Turkey, XV., 1877. No. 77, p. 58.

desolated, was as bad as its conduct in respect to the punishment of offenders. Practical suggestions made by the British Government remained not only unadopted but even unacknowledged. In Bosnia a Commission of control had been appointed to watch over the execution of the promised reforms. But on 1st of February, 1877, Acting-Consul Freeman reported that it had been dissolved, and that "its results had been absolutely nil."* Mr. Baring's time and attention had been so engrossed with the proceedings of the Commission over which he was sent to watch that he had little time to report on the general condition of the province of Bulgaria. But when he did so, he spoke in no doubtful language. On the 4th February he reported that, "though there were occasional lulls in Turkish ferocity and fanaticism, still the deeds of violence which were constantly being perpetrated proved that the lives and property of Christians were not much safer than they had been in May last."† "The police," he says, "were as much dreaded as brigands. Crimes of violence," he adds, "may indeed happen everywhere, and perhaps there may be more assaults in the streets of London in a night than in those of Philippopolis in a week. But in these provinces we see a state of things which is unknown in other lands. In 99 cases out of 100 the murderer or

* Ibid., No. 112, p. 86.
† Ibid., No. 156, Inclos. 4, p. 113.

robber belongs to one class, whilst the victim belongs to another. The former is sure to be a Mussulman, the latter a Christian. There is no reciprocity in crime, if I may be allowed the expression." From Tirnova, on the Danube, similar evidence came of the condition of things. Captain Ardagh, writing on the 14th January, 1877, declared that with the existing Turkish officials reform was impossible, and that "without foreign supervision success was hopeless."* On the 4th of January, 1877, Lord Salisbury forwarded a report from Consul Reade stating that in a visit he had lately made to the Bazardjick district he found the Government tax-gatherers collecting the taxes in the most arbitrary and cruel manner from the villagers, who from the late disasters had lost almost everything, and were hardly able to maintain their families."† From every province in European Turkey similar reports were coming during the time of the sittings of the Conference and at the period of its close.

A period of three months elapsed between the defeat of the Congress and the commencement of the war with Russia. During these months further evidence in abundance was supplied of the conduct of the Turkish Government and of the condition of the Turkish provinces. This evidence came from Consular agents favourably disposed to Turkey.

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* Ibid., No. 51, Inclos. 1, p. 38.

† Turkey, II., 1877. No. 165, Inclos. 2, p. 209.

During the month of February Mr. Consul Blunt sent Mr. Longworth through an extensive district, including Urcup, Mitrovitza, Novi Bazaar, and Sienitza. In his report Mr. Longworth says, "Should present state of affairs continue much longer, I have been assured by several persons that a great mass of the Rayahs will be driven to the extremity of either revolting or professing Mahommedanism, in the endeavour to obtain some protection for life, honour, and property."* From Bourgas, in April, Mr. Vice-Consul Brophy reported on the exasperation of the Turks who were summoned to serve in the army, who declared that they would revenge themselves by exterminating the whole Bulgarian race: language which did not appear to him to be mere idle boasting, "but to indicate the existence of a settled purpose which boded no good to the Slavs of Roumelia."† From the Asiatic Provinces accounts not less indicative of hopeless anarchy were coming in. Consul Zohrab, from Erzeroom, quoted the opinion of an officer, holding high command in the Turkish Army, that "whatever could be said or done was quite useless, for the Mollahs have the upper hand in Turkey, and so long as they continue in power nothing can or will be done to ameliorate the condition of the people, or improve the laws."‡

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* Turkey, XXV., No. 203, Inclos. 1, p. 147.
† Ibid., No. 274, Inclos. 2, p. 210.
‡ Ibid., No. 182, p. 128.

But the universal anarchy of the Provinces was not the only proof of the hopelessness of expecting reforms from Turkey. The conduct of the Government at this time was the most convincing proof of this. After all the massacres and all the executions, the Turkish prisons were still full of Bulgarian political prisoners. They were kept there without being brought to trial. Early in January, 1877, Lord Salisbury had reported that all the insurgents in the Mitrihani Prison at Stamboul were "heavily ironed —their chains, which were fastened at the ankle and at the wrist, being at least four times as heavy as those of any of the ordinary criminals." This fact was attested by the personal inspection of Mr. Currie, a member of Her Majesty's Special Mission.* For months the Porte had been promising to publish an amnesty. For months the English Ambassador, or Chargé, had been constantly urging that this promise should be fulfilled. They were met always by new assurances, and by fresh excuses for postponement. So late as the beginning of May, when Mr. Layard had begun his work, he found that in this matter nothing had been done, and his remonstrances continued to be as futile as those of his predecessors.

Nor was this all. In contrast with this vindictive and cruel treatment of the Bulgarians, the Porte was continuing to show marked favour to the leaders in

* Turkey, II, 1877. No. 166, Inclos., p. 211.

the massacres of May, 1876. The English Government had demanded the punishment of Shefket Pasha. Mr. Layard found on the 3rd of May, 1877, that this man had been appointed to a high command in the Army of the Danube. The Ambassador at once sent a message to the Grand Vizier, that, if the appointment were not cancelled immediately, "his friendly relations must cease." The Pashas could not even understand the message. He found them "surprised that her Majesty's Government should attach so much importance to the employment of an officer who by his activity could render them great services in the war." The loss of Mr. Layard's friendship was, however, too serious to be incurred; and the "independent" Government of Turkey promised that their favourite officer, thus denounced by a Foreign Minister, should be exiled to Bagdad.* But not even the fear of losing Mr. Layard's friendship could prevent the Turks from lying. A few days later he was surprised to find that Shefket Pasha, instead of being sent to Bagdad, had been appointed to an important command at Erzeroom. The British Ambassador once more threatened; and once more the old assurances were repeated.†

Such was the condition of the country, and such continued to be the conduct of the Turkish Government, at the time when the English Cabinet was willing to submit to the defeat of the Congress which

* Ibid., No. 265, p. 205. † Ibid., No. 346, p. 263.

had been held by Europe at its own invitation: and when it was prepared to take the responsibility of advising the Powers to trust to a new issue of Turkish promises.

There is, however, one other question connected with the conclusions to be drawn from the absolute refusal of Turkey to accept any one of the guarantees demanded by the Conference, and that is the question whether the new Constitution, which had been proclaimed with so much dramatic effect on the first day of the sittings of the Full Conference, could or could not be accepted honestly as affording any hope of Turkish Reform. On this subject the evidence already adduced goes far to prove that even if that Constitution were excellent in itself, there was no agency in the Turkish system capable of carrying its provisions into effect. But it is well to observe that even the Constitution itself, considered simply as a scheme, did not afford any one of the securities which were required. The British Plenipotentiary very properly considered it to be his duty to examine this matter carefully; and I reproduce in full the important despatch* in which he deals with it:—

"*The Marquis of Salisbury to the Earl of Derby.*

"Pera, January 13th, 1877.

"MY LORD,

"In the course of the pending negotiations much stress has been laid by the Turkish Plenipoten-

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Turkey, II., 1877, No. 222, p. 302.

tiaries, as well as by the Grand Vizier, upon the Constitution that has been granted by the Sultan. Its provisions are frequently appealed to as though their existence furnished a conclusive answer to the suggestion of any arrangements inconsistent with them, and its proclamation is looked upon as a sufficient guarantee that former abuses will cease, and that promises of reforms, which have hitherto been neglected, will henceforth be faithfully fulfilled. As your Lordship is aware, the suggestion has been officiously made by the Turkish Government, that in lieu of guarantees the Conference should take act of the issue of the Constitution. It may, therefore, not be out of place if I were to submit to your Lordship some observations with respect to the real effect and operation of its provisions.

"If it is to have any real influence in preventing the oppression to which both Turks and Christians in so many parts of the Empire have been exposed, it must not only provide machinery for securing the enactment of wise laws, but also a pure and efficient administration for carrying those laws into execution.

"For the first of these objects at least *some apparent* provision is made. A legislature, consisting of two Chambers, is established, not differing widely in its Constitution from that which existed in France during the second Empire.

"If it were possible to entertain the hypothesis of a free election under the existing circumstances of the Turkish Empire, some importance would attach to the clauses by which the qualification of deputies is defined. Among other matters, it is provided that they must be inhabitants of the province that they

represent, that they must know Turkish, that after the lapse of four years they must be able to read it and 'autant que possible' to write it, and that they are disqualified for election if they are 'notoirement déconsidérés par leur conduite.' It is difficult to see how the provisions relating to the Turkish language are to be carried into effect. But they will certainly give an overwhelming advantage to the Mohammedan population; and as the writing of Turkish is a rare accomplishment among the Christian population, the requirement of it will enable the Government to exclude, in a great majority of cases, the persons who are distasteful to them. The last disqualification is capable of being so interpreted as to place the exclusion of any individual entirely at the discretion of the Administration.

"The powers conferred upon this Legislature are not extensive. It votes upon measures submitted to it by the Sultan; but the Chamber of Deputies has, apparently, only the power of amending provisions objected to by the Senate. The two Chambers conjointly may petition the Sultan to introduce a new law 'sur des matières comprises dans leurs attributions,' a limitation of which no explanation is anywhere furnished; but unless the Sultan consents, the law cannot be introduced. The law of the Budget stands upon a special footing. It must be introduced at the beginning of every Session, and is voted, chapter by chapter, by the Chamber of Deputies. In this case the power of amendment is conceded to the Chamber; but, as no decision can be taken without the assent of the Ministers, this power has little practical value. If the Government desires to

spend any money or to raise any revenue without the authority of the Assembly, and in its absence, they can do so, but a law justifying the proceeding must be presented in the ensuing Session. The Constitution does not say what consequences would follow in case the law of justification should not pass. Subject to the same undefined responsibility, the Government may, in the absence of the Assembly, issue a decree on any matter which they think it necessary to deal with, and (if it be not contrary to the Constitution) the decree has the force of law.

"The Chamber of Deputies may also pass a resolution to ask a question of a Minister; but this privilege, like others, is restrained from excess by a reservation. The Minister may postpone his answer if he thinks fit.

"The Ministers are declared to be responsible. Their responsibility consists in the provision that they may, if the Sultan thinks fit, but not otherwise, be tried by a procedure not yet determined on.

"Any doubt arising as to the meaning of any part of the Constitution is solved by the Senate, which is nominated by the Sultan.

"It is obvious that even if this Constitution were in operation among a people attached to liberty, and were practically worked by independent Representatives, it would have but a slender effect in checking maladministration and restraining the abuse of power. But there is no probability of the appearance of popular leaders who would work the liberties granted, such as they are, for the purpose of restraining the Government, for an unlimited power of exile is by a special enactment reserved to the Sultan,

and any person exiled loses his seat as Senator or Deputy.

"The portion of the Constitution which concerns the Chamber is elaborated with considerable care. The rest of its provisions only exist in skeleton. Many broad principles are laid down, but their execution is referred to laws which are not yet in existence, or to 'règlements' which are to be issued by the Sultan. The appointment, qualifications, and jurisdiction of all functionaries, the constitution of Tribunals and the administration of the provinces, are dealt with in this manner. It is, of course, impossible to forecast the character of the legislation which will be adopted upon these important matters. The dismissal of functionaries at their discretion is especially reserved to the Government.

"These observations will enable your Lordship to judge how far the Constitution can be looked upon as a guarantee against maladministration or a restraint upon the excesses of arbitrary power. The Representatives of the Powers have not been as yet officially placed in possession of the proposals which the Grand Vizier, I believe, intends to make, that an official communication of the Constitution to the Conference should be accepted as a guarantee on the part of the Porte in lieu of all others that have been proposed. But they have been consulted upon the subject, and their opinion appears to be that no serious importance could be attached to such a guarantee.

"I have, &c.

(Signed) "SALISBURY."

Although this Despatch is quite sufficient for its purpose, it by no means exhausts the subject. A closer analysis of Midhat Pasha's Constitution would show the innumerable ingenious reservations and conditions, not apparent on the surface, which would enable the class to which he belongs to perpetuate their corrupt and corrupting power. It is needless, however, to go into farther detail. Subsequent experience has sufficiently shown how useless this paper Constitution is for remedying the vices of Turkish administration. It may, however, be well to observe that worthless as Lord Salisbury's Despatch shows the Constitution to have been even in its own structure and theoretical provisions, the Turks would not offer or propose to bind themselves by any promise to Europe in respect to it, or even formally to communicate it to the Powers.

It need hardly be said that the defeat of the Congress had, as it could not fail to have, a disastrous effect in aggravating every evil under which the Christian population suffered. The Mohammedan population and the official classes saw the whole of Europe defied by their Government—and defied apparently with no other results than the quiet retirement of the Plenipotentiaries and the application to them of the "bag and baggage" policy, which Mr. Gladstone had recommended as applicable

* Ibid, No. 223, P. 304.

to the Turkish Pashas. It was inevitable that, under such circumstances, the sense of triumph should lead to aggravated licence. Such, accordingly, was the actual result. Consul Reade, writing from Rustchuk on the 6th of March, said, "Indeed, if anything, the state of things is worse than ever, and this is chiefly to be attributed to the election of the Government employés, who think that Turkey, as they say, having braved all the Great Powers of Europe, they can carry on their oppression and injustice with impunity."*

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Ibid., No. 267, p. 188.

## CHAPTER IX.

NEGOTIATIONS FROM THE CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE AT CONSTANTINOPLE IN JANUARY, 1877, TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR BY RUSSIA IN APRIL, 1877.

WHEN the Conference broke up, the English Cabinet was reduced to its usual condition of having nothing to propose. Reliance on Turkish promises was the only resource, and to this insincerity the Queen's Government stooped again. The reforms which Lord Salisbury had pronounced to be illusory; the Constitution which he had analysed and shown to be a mockery; the "paper currency" which the Home Secretary had declared could no longer be taken in liquidation of the debt owed by Turkey to Europe—these were to be once more accepted, not only with humility, but with humiliation. The Foreign Secretary said in the House of Lords that "time and patience" would have brought a remedy. Whose time, and whose patience? it may well be asked. It was not our time and our patience. We could well afford both,—for we had nothing to endure, except, indeed, offence to "sentiment." But it was the time and patience of millions who had already

endured centuries of oppression, whose subjection we had contributed to prolong, whose patience had been exhausted, and whose condition we had now helped to aggravate by a policy which at once incensed the Turks, and then ostentatiously left these Turks free in the indulgence of their revenge. Painful as the whole attitude of the British Government has been throughout this Eastern Question, there is no more painful episode in its history than the course taken between the close of the Conference and the declaration of war by Russia. Let us see what the steps of that course were.

Under the pressure of exhortations from France and Russia against encouraging the Turks to resist the proposals of the Conference, we have seen that the English Cabinet had, on the 22nd of December, 1876, decided that if the Turks persisted in refusal, both the British Plenipotentiary and the British Ambassador were to retire from Constantinople. But with that careful forethought which was never wanting to provide against and preclude even the possibility of being committed to any decided course, it was intimated that the withdrawal of Sir H. Elliot might be put on the expediency of his coming home "to report upon the situation."

When the defeat of the Conference actually took place, ample advantage was taken of this precaution to prevent Sir H. Elliot's departure from having any force or meaning as an indication even of displeasure.

On the 5th of February, a Despatch was written anxiously explaining that he was recalled for no other purpose than to report, and that Mr. Jocelyn was to be left in charge of the Embassy.* None of these indications of retreat from the duties and even from the language of our position were concealed from the Turkish Ambassador in London. Another indication even more significant was now added. If there was one assertion more fundamental than another to the position which had been taken by the Powers, it was the assertion that Turkey could not be entrusted with the execution of her own promised reforms. This assertion had been repeated over and over again by Lord Salisbury. He had made it the subject of carefully reasoned Papers. It was the only justification of the demands made by the Powers. Any retreat from this assertion, therefore, was a retreat from the whole aim and object of the Conference, and from the only ground on which it was possible to defend the holding of such a Conference at all. Yet the moment the Conference had separated, the language of the English Foreign Secretary relapsed into the tone of giving confidential advice to Turkey how best to avoid external interference.

In this matter there was a sharp contrast between the conduct of England and the conduct of the other Powers. On the very day after that on which Sir H. Elliot left Constantinople, the French Government

* Turkey II., 1877, No. 238, p. 380.

informed our Foreign Secretary that the Porte had asked their help in reorganising the Turkish Police. The French Ambassador pointed out that this request touched an essential point of the programme which was arrived at in common with the Powers, and to which the French Government wished to adhere. The Constitution of the Police in Turkey was to be regulated with the assent of Europe. They could not therefore entertain the proposal without knowing what was the view of the other Powers. The English Foreign Secretary had no such scruples. He replied that "speaking for himself, at least, he thought that if the Porte showed a disposition substantially to carry into effect the more material of the reforms which had been urged upon it in the Conference, it would not be our policy to hinder or discourage such a course."* This opinion involved a complete abandonment of the doctrine that the professed dispositions of the Porte in the matter could not be relied on. It virtually amounted to an intimation to the French Government that the doctrine need not now be insisted upon.

The impolicy of such an intimation even when made to one of the Christian Powers, is obvious enough. But what are we to say of the impolicy of making the same intimation to the Turks themselves? Yet this was the course taken by the British Minister. On

* Turkey, XV., 1877, No. 24, p. 17.

the 29th of January, 1877, Odian Effendi called at the Foreign Office and intimated the desire of his Government to "adopt as far as possible the reforms recommended by the Conference." Here was an opportunity of impressing on the Turks that England adhered to the belief which her Plenipotentiaries had expressed, that the most essential of all those reforms was the European supervision and guarantees. But, on the contrary, the Foreign Secretary took occasion to declare that "he cared comparatively little for questions of form, provided the end for which we laboured was attained. He thought that the more nearly the Government of the Sultan found itself able to confirm to the general system of administration recommended by the Conference, the less opportunity could be afforded to those who might wish to take advantage of its failure as a pretext for war."

Nor was this the only declaration of the British Minister which cut at the root of the whole action of the Powers. He declared that the first object of England in bringing about the Conference had been to preserve the peace of Europe; and the next had been to bring about administrative reform in Turkey. This separation between two inseparable parts of the same object, and the order of precedence in which they were thus placed, was in effect a declaration that England desired peace at any price and at any cost, not to herself, indeed, but to the Christian population.

It is impossible that a British Minister could have made to a Turkish Envoy a speech more disloyal than this to the concert of Europe, and therefore more fatal to the interests of peace. It implied not only that England did not believe in the hopelessness of Turkish reforms, but that in advancing such a plea her colleagues in the Conference, or some of them, had been merely taking advantage of "a pretext for war." How the British Plenipotentiary, who was also a member of the Cabinet, could assent to such language as this after his Declarations in the Conference, that if war arose the responsibility of it would rest solely with the Turks, is one of the many questions connected with this history which must remain unsolved.

In contrast with this tone and with this conduct towards the allies of England in the Conference, let us look to the language and conduct of Russia at the same critical time.

When Lord Salisbury gave his account of the last sitting of the Conference he reported that the language of the Russian Plenipotentiary, though severe, did not absolutely threaten war. And this is quite true. Russia had agreed to one modification after another of the terms to be pressed upon the Porte, until at last those terms were brought down to an "irreducible minimum;" and when at last even this was rejected, Russia still clung to the hope that the

Powers would find some method of insisting on what they had all agreed to as essential.

Accordingly, when on the 22nd January, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg called on Prince Gortchakow "with a view to elicit, if possible, what views he entertained as to the future course to be pursued in regard to Eastern affairs, on the failure of the Conference," he was told at once that "Russia would not separate from the European concert; but he certainly was of opinion that Europe had received an insult which she could not possibly accept, and that she ought to defend her honour and have recourse to coercive measures. General Ignatieff had heard a report that Turkey might negotiate directly with Russia. But Prince Gortchakow had replied that Russia was associated with the other Powers of Europe, and would enter into no separate negotiation."*

In accordance with this determination on the part of the Russian Government, it addressed, on 19th January, 1877, to its representatives at all the European Courts the following despatch :—

(*Translation.*).

"Circular.] "St. Petersburg, January 19, 1877.

"M. L'AMBASSADEUR,

"The refusal opposed by the Porte to the wishes of Europe involves the Eastern crisis in a new phase.

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* Ibid., No. 30, p. 22.

The Imperial Cabinet has from the outset considered this question as a European one, which should not and cannot be solved but by the unanimous agreement of the Great Powers. As a matter of fact all exclusive and personal considerations were disclaimed by all the Cabinets, and the difficulty resolved itself into inducing the Government of Turkey to govern the Christian subjects of the Sultan in a just and humane manner, so as not to expose Europe to permanent crises which are revolting to its conscience, and endanger its tranquillity.

"It was, therefore, a question of common unanimity and interest. The Imperial Cabinet has accordingly endeavoured to bring about a European concert to appease this crisis and prevent its return. It has come to an agreement with the Austro-Hungarian Government, as the one most immediately interested, in order to submit to the European Cabinets propositions which might serve as a basis for a general understanding and common action.

"These propositions, set forth in Count Andrassy's despatch of the $\frac{13}{30}$th December, 1875, had obtained the adhesion of all the Great Powers, and also of the Porte. The want of executive sanction having, however, rendered this agreement abortive, the Cabinets were placed, by the Berlin Memorandum, in a position to pronounce on the principle of an eventual concert, having in view more effectual measures for realising their mutual aim.

"The agreement not having proved unanimous, and diplomatic action being thus interrupted, the Cabinets recommenced negotiations in consequence of the aggravation of the crisis by the massacres in

Bulgaria, the revolution in Constantinople, and the war with Servia and Montenegro.

"On the initiative of the English Government they agreed upon a basis and guarantees of pacification to be discussed at a Conference to be held at Constantinople. This Conference arrived during its preliminary meetings at a complete understanding, both as to the conditions of peace and as to the reforms to be introduced. The result was communicated to the Porte as the fixed and unanimous wish of Europe, and met with an obstinate refusal.

"Thus after more than a year of diplomatic efforts attesting the importance attached by the Great Powers to the pacification of the East, the right which they have, in view of the common welfare, to assure that pacification, and their firm determination to bring it about, the Cabinets again find themselves in the same position as at the commencement of this crisis, which has been moreover aggravated by bloodshed, heated passions, accumulated ruin, and the prospect of an indefinite prolongation of the deplorable state of things which hangs over Europe, and justly preoccupies the attention of both peoples and Governments.

"The Porte makes light of her former engagements, of her duty as a member of the European system, and of the unanimous wishes of the Great Powers. Far from having advanced one step towards a satisfactory solution, the Eastern question has become aggravated, and is at the present moment a standing menace to the peace of Europe, the sentiments of humanity, and the conscience of Christian nations.

"Under these circumstances, before determining on the steps which it may be proper to take, his Majesty the Emperor is desirous of knowing the limits within which the Cabinets with whom we have till now endeavoured, and still desire, so far as may be possible, to proceed in common, are willing to act.

"The object held in view by the Great Powers was clearly defined by the proceedings of the Conference.

"The refusal of the Turkish Government threatens both the dignity and the tranquillity of Europe.

"It is necessary for us to know what the Cabinets, with whom we have hitherto acted in common, *propose to do* with a view of meeting this refusal, and insuring the execution of their wishes.

"You are requested to seek information in this respect, after reading and leaving a copy of the present despatch with the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

"Accept, &c.

(Signed) "GORTCHAKOW."

This Circular was communicated to the English Government on the 3rd February; and so conciliatory was the tone of the Russian Government, that a few days later Count Schouvalow even suggested the possibility of a new Turkish Vizier adopting the recommendations of the Conference, now that this could be done "without the appearance of pressure."*

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* Ibid., No. 92, p. 78.

The English Minister was, of course, eager to act on this suggestion. But the reply of the Grand Vizier, which was reported on the 13th, was not such as to encourage the hope of any material change in the Turkish methods of dealing with reform.*

Meantime, the Russian Circular, with its terrible simplicity of recapitulation, and its not less terrible interrogations, lay unanswered. But, as usual in every case of crisis in the affairs of Turkey, there was a new revolution at Constantinople. Midhat Pasha had fallen. This was a great relief in the perplexity of the situation. It afforded another excuse for delay. On the 14th February the Foreign Secretary told the Russian Ambassador that her Majesty's Government "had determined that it would be better to defer their reply until events should have developed themselves."

But in Turkey events always develop themselves in one direction. Russia knew this very well, and showed no anxiety whatever to hurry the bewildered Powers. On the same day on which the British Ministers resigned themselves once more to wait upon events, the Porte replied to their friendly representations and inquiries that what the Imperial Government of the Sultan wanted "was to be let alone, and spared foreign complications." It was doing everything that was right. Let people confide in its sincerity and the loyalty of its intentions.†

* Ibid., No. 115, p. 88. † Ibid., No. 127, p. 97.

This reply once more alarmed the English Cabinet. On the 18th February it addressed a despatch to Mr. Jocelyn, remonstrating against the answer of the Porte. "It was far from satisfactory, or such as her Majesty's Government had hoped to receive." What they had wished to hear and to be able to repeat, was that the Porte was now, of its own accord, proceeding to carry into effect the measures proposed by the Powers in Conference. If an announcement to this effect could be made in reply to the Russian Circular, "it might go far to avert the danger of hostilities on the part of Russia, which would otherwise become imminent whenever the season admitted of military operations."

Here we have again recourse had to the fear of Russia as the only motive power capable of acting on the Turks.

On the day after the date of this despatch the Russian Ambassador in London followed up the advantage of his position by giving to the English Foreign Secretary a summary of the recent communications from his Government:—

"Foreign Office, February 19, 1877.

"MY LORD,

"The Russian Ambassador called upon me and repeated to me the substance of the communica-

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* Ibid., No. 142, p. 104.

tions which had lately reached him from Prince Gortchakow, which were to the following effect :—

"In the midst of all the changes at Constantinople, Prince Gortchakow says the Emperor of Russia continues to pursue the same object, though the means by which it is sought to attain it may vary according to circumstances.

"The object in question is that which all Europe has in view—the conclusion of peace between Turkey, Servia, and Montenegro, and the improvement of the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey on the bases already indicated by the Powers. The Emperor has always declared that his endeavours for this solution were made in concert with other Powers, and that unless this concert failed him he would not take isolated action.

"In Prince Gortchakow's opinion a great danger will be averted if peace is concluded between Turkey and the Principalities. If, further, Edhem Pasha executes measures of real improvement in the position of the Christian subjects of Turkey, his Highness has no doubt the Emperor would take this result into consideration; but for this purpose it is necessary that there should be action, a beginning of something done, and not words only.

"It remains then to be seen, Prince Gortchakow continues, whether the ulterior action of Russia is to be collective or isolated.

"The Cabinets of Europe must decide that question. If the Governments of the other Powers answer that the Conference having failed, they will in future pursue a policy of abstention, that will be

taken by the Russian Government as an indication that Russia must act for herself.

"If the Powers, on the other hand, reply that they still maintain their requirements as to the improvement of the condition of the Christian population of Turkey, and that the unanimous wish of Europe in this respect *must be* ("doit être") respected by Turkey, that principle having once been laid down, namely, that Europe does not abandon the future of the populations in question, nothing prevents the continuance of Russia in the prosecution of this object by collective action.

"On making this communication to me, Count Schouvalow repeated to me again an assurance of the sincere desire of the Emperor Alexander to arrive at a pacific solution.

I am, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."

Again, on the 21st February, the Russian Ambassador returned to the charge in that language of pitiless moderation which made all the communications of Russia at this time so difficult to deal with or to answer.

"Foreign Office, February 21, 1877.

"The Russian Ambassador called upon me this afternoon, and spoke to me at length on the stage at which the question in regard to Turkey had arrived; and I have thought it desirable to place the more important of his observations on record.

"He said that the Russian Government were in a position of considerable difficulty. The expense and inconvenience of keeping up their armaments on the present footing was very great, and could not be continued indefinitely. On the other hand, unless public opinion could be satisfied by the announcement of some specific advantage that had been gained by the armament, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to proceed to demobilise the forces which had been placed on a war footing; and even the Minister of Finance, who was necessarily most alive to the disadvantage of the present situation, would prefer a speedy campaign to the alternative of disarmament, with the possible necessity of a fresh mobilisation next year.

"Count Schouvalow then spoke of the proposal made by Midhat Pasha to Sir Henry Elliot (and to which I had alluded in the House of Lords last night), that a fixed time, say a year, should be granted to the Porte for carrying out the reforms, and that if at the end of that period it were found that fair progress had not been made, the Turkish Government would be ready to submit to the appointment of an International Commission or such other form of control as might be held desirable.

"His Excellency seemed to think favourably of the idea, and to believe that in some arrangement of this kind the groundwork for a settlement might be found.

"Count Schouvalow said that he did not consider it necessary that in the reply to be given to the Circular of Prince Gortchakow there should be any

indication of an intention to resort eventually to united measures of coercion against the Porte. It would, in his opinion, be sufficient that the reply should be so conceived as not to imply that Russia was to be left to herself to secure what advantages she deemed necessary for the Christian populations of Turkey."

It is difficult to relate with gravity the answers to which the British Government was reduced. On the day following this communication from Count Schouvalow, the Foreign Secretary placed in his hands a Memorandum from the Turkish Government, setting forth the progress it was making in the work of reform. This paper was even more childish and evasive than usual. There was to be an elective Commission of Control to superintend the execution of the reforms, under the presidency of a member of the Turkish Government. But the Grand Vizier considered that there would be no practical utility to be derived from it until the laws which it was intended to superintend had received the assent of the (new) Turkish Parliament.*

On another occasion the Grand Vizier assured Lord Derby that "the Sublime Porte had decided to have the system of law in use in the different countries of Europe studied with all the care that the importance of the subject requires, so as to acquire

* Ibid., No. 177, Inclos. 2, p. 132.

the necessary foundation for the reorganisation of our own judicial institutions."*

It was not likely that Russia could be satisfied with such mockeries as these.

Again, on the 26th of February, the Russian Ambassador "mentioned" to the Foreign Secretary the substance of a telegram he had received from his Government.† It had now half a million of men under arms. Nevertheless, Russia preferred a pacific solution; but his Government must have some serious grounds to justify their disarming. It depended on the Powers to render such a solution possible by maintaining the necessity of a real improvement in the condition of the Christian population of Turkey, and by declaring that when the term allowed for carrying into effect the reforms had expired without sufficient result, they would seek the means of imposing them. "The improvement of the condition of the Christian populations would thus," Prince Gortchakow said, "remain under the guarantee of Europe, and there would be no necessity for Russia to separate herself from the rest of the Powers."

Meantime the Turkish Government was showing at least its usual skill and cunning. The English Foreign Secretary had been long urging both the execution of

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* Ibid., No. 208, p. 148.
† Ibid., No. 189, p. 139.

the capital sentences passed upon the leaders in the Bulgarian massacres, and an amnesty on behalf of the remaining political prisoners. Considering the thousands who had been massacred, and the hundreds who had been executed on account of an insurrection which had been long suppressed, this was but a reasonable request. The Turkish Government pretended to believe that the amnesty was to be universal, so as to include the criminals who had been sentenced to death, but whom the Porte was determined, if possible, not to punish. Lord Derby was obliged to expose more than once this ingenious confounding of two very different cases, and continued in vain to urge the execution of justice in the one, and the exercise of mercy in the other. In one document, however, of this date he showed some knowledge of the true character of the Government with which he was dealing. He had to thank Mr. Baring for his conduct at Philippopolis, and in doing so he wrote as follows on the 23rd of February:—"His clear, exhaustive reports have been read with much interest, and her Majesty's Government feel assured that in the cases where sentences of condemnation have been passed upon the persons guilty of the massacres in Bulgaria, those sentences have been mainly due to the close attention with which Mr. Baring has watched the proceedings of the tribunal, and to the control which his firmness and knowledge of the language have enabled him to

exercise over the members of the Commission."* It is needless to say that a Cabinet which was responsible for this despatch could have no excuse for even pretending to hope that without European superintendence there was any prospect for the execution of reforms in Turkey.

It will have been observed that in the last communication from the Russian Government there were indications of a disposition to make some new proposal, with the view of attaining the great end in view, and yet without hurrying the other Powers towards resolutions which they seemed as yet unwilling to entertain. Those indications pointed to the alternative of allowing some specified time to Turkey for the real commencement of reforms, and also to a Russian disarmament on the condition that all the Powers would engage in some formal document to enforce at last, if necessary, the common resolution of Europe.

Early in March this proposal took more definite form at a meeting between Count Schouvalow and General Ignatieff at Paris. On the 9th, General Ignatieff called on Lord Lyons and represented that Russia could not disarm unless the Government could show the people that something had been obtained in return for the expense incurred in mobilising the army, that Russia and the rest of

* Ibid., No. 203, p. 145.

Europe had not been absolutely set at naught by the Porte, and that some security had been obtained for the Christian populations. The Conference had separated without any final Protocol. This omission might now be remedied. A Protocol might now be signed embodying the reforms recommended by the Conference, requiring the Porte to execute them, and stating that if the Porte should neglect to do so the Powers "aviseraient." Lord Lyons thought that General Ignatieff's language implied that on the signature of such a Protocol Russia would place her army on a peace footing, but he did not say so in so many words.

On his return from Paris, on the 11th of March, Count Schouvalow called at the Foreign Office and placed in the hands of the English Foreign Secretary the draft of a Protocol which his Government proposed for the signature of the six Powers. Lord Derby took it for reference to the Cabinet, and on the 13th informed the Russian Ambassador that "her Majesty's Government were ready to agree in principle to such a Protocol, provided they could come to an understanding as to its terms."†

On the same day the Foreign Secretary reported in detail to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg what had passed on the 11th of March. Russia could not retire, nor send back her troops without having

† Ibid., No. 247, pp. 172, 173. † Ibid., No 278, p. 194.

obtained some tangible result as regarded the condition of the Christian population of Turkey. The Emperor was sincerely desirous of peace, but "not," it was emphatically added, "at any price." Russia was afraid that the answers likely to be returned to her Circular would show once more disunion among the Powers. This would be a great evil. Russia would be forced to seek for a solution either by separate negotiation with the Porte, or by single-handed war. Under these circumstances the most practical solution would be the signature of a Protocol "which should, so to speak, terminate the incident." Russia would not insist on more extensive reforms than had been already agreed upon. What she wanted was a document placing on record that these reforms would continue to be an object of interest to all the Powers. Nor did Russia insist on a fixed limit of time. It might rest with the Powers to determine by general agreement whether Turkey was advancing or not in a satisfactory manner in her work of regeneration. If the hopes of the Powers should once more be disappointed, they would reserve to themselves to consider in common the action which they would deem indispensable to secure the well-being of the Christian population of Turkey and the interests of the general peace.*

The assent of the Queen's Government in principle

* Ibid., No. 279, p. 194-5.

to such a Protocol as that indicated by Russia was given under these conditions—1st, that Russia should give some formal pledge of her intention to disarm if the Protocol were signed ; 2nd, that the Porte should not be asked to sign it at all ; and 3rd, that the terms of the Protocol must be agreed to by the other Powers.*

On the 21st of March, communications as to the form of the Protocol had so far advanced that the Russian Ambassador and General Ignatieff came together to the Foreign Office to discuss the various questions on which a provisional agreement had been arrived at.

At this interview the English Foreign Secretary declared that the demobilisation of the Russian army was the inducement held out to the Queen's Government to sign the Protocol, and as the assurance of that demobilisation was the justification for so doing, they must be able to lay before Parliament evidence that their object in that respect had been secured.

The two Russian Ambassadors at once objected to this statement of the case. Turkey not being asked to sign the Protocol would be under no pledge to disarm. Russia could not bind herself to disarm on a condition which would leave Turkey free on that point. War still existed between the Porte and

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* Ibid., No. 280, p. 195.

Montenegro, and this was a contest in which Russia might be compelled to interfere. Even on the score of dignity alone Russia could not disarm before any similar demand was addressed to Turkey.

The English Minister then asked if they would tell him the conditions under which the Russian Government would agree to demobilise, supposing always that they were ready to give such assurances on any condition, and in any form.

Count Schouvalow replied, and General Ignatieff concurred, that the Emperor would be willing to disarm on these conditions: 1st, that the Porte should begin; 2nd, that peace should be concluded with Montenegro; and 3rd, that Turkish reforms should be seriously taken in hand. He added that demobilisation would be stopped at once if there were any fresh massacres perpetrated on the Christian population.*

Two days later, on the 23rd of March, the Foreign Secretary intimated to Count Schouvalow that the English Cabinet by no means wished to break off negotiations, although they objected to the proposal that Russian demobilisation was to depend on the three conditions mentioned at the previous interview. The English Minister argued that there would be no humiliation in Russia being the first to disarm, to which the Russian Ambassador replied that there

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* Ibid., No. 338, pp. 225, 226.

was not one of the eighty millions of Russians who would not think it disgraceful to disarm in the face of a Turkish force ready to take the field. On this point Count Schouvalow maintained his ground.

The English Minister then asked whether a solution might not be found in simultaneous disarmament by both States. This question elicited from the Russian Ambassador the suggestion which was ultimately adopted. He would consult his Government on it, but only if Lord Derby thought it one which would be likely to meet with acceptance in England. The suggestion was that the Protocol should be signed in the first instance, and that the Porte, if willing to listen to the advice of the Powers as given in the Protocol (namely, that they should disarm, and should seriously undertake the work of reform), should send an Ambassador to St. Petersburg to treat directly with Russia. In that case Count Schouvalow would advise his Government to disarm at the same time as the Porte. The English Minister then asked what was to follow, if the Porte refused to take these steps. The reply was that, in that case, the Protocol would have no effect. Count Schouvalow farther suggested that all mention of demobilisation might be struck out of the proposed Protocol.*

On the following day, the 24th of March, the

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Ibid., No. 366, p. 254.

Russian Ambassador gave more definite form to this suggested method of proceeding. He proposed that before the signature of the Protocol, the Russian Ambassador should make a separate Declaration in the name of his Government, and leave with the British Government a Memorandum, to be used publicly if necessary, to the effect that, if the Porte accepted the advice of the Powers, and showed itself ready to replace its forces on a peace footing, and to take seriously in hand the reforms mentioned in the Protocol, the Sultan might send a special envoy to St. Petersburg to treat of disarmament—to which the Emperor would then consent.

This proposal was reserved for the consideration of the Cabinet.* Unless it was favourably viewed by the British Government, the Russian Ambassador had not intended to ask authority to make the proposition.

On the 26th of March it appears that Count Schouvalow had telegraphed to his Government on the subject, from which it is to be inferred that the decision of the Cabinet on his previous communication, had been sufficiently favourable to encourage him to do so.†

On the following day, the 27th of March, the Russian Ambassador came to the Foreign Office, to report that his Government, being sincerely desirous

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* Ibid., No. 369, p. 255. † Ibid., No. 384, p. 263.

of peace, would authorise him to make at the time of the signature of the Protocol, a Declaration to the effect which he had mentioned in the conversation of the 24th. The tenor of the Russian Declaration was then given in terms more specific than before. These terms were as follows:—"That if the Porte accepts the advice of the Powers, and shows itself ready to replace its forces on a peace footing, and to take in hand seriously the reforms mentioned in the Protocol, the Sultan may send a special envoy to St. Petersburg to treat on the question of disarmament, to which disarmament the Emperor of Russia will also, on his side, assent." Count Schouvalow added that, "if it were considered necessary, his Government would be ready to repeat this Declaration directly by telegraph at Constantinople." The Russian Ambassador proceeded to urge that there should be no delay in the signature of the Protocol. In his opinion, the unanimous voice of Europe, affirming its agreement, and giving wise advice to Turkey, would act at that moment favourably on the decision of the Porte. When the Porte found that Russia was ready to demobilise, and that it rested with itself alone to secure peace, and to pursue its work of reorganisation, it would show itself more moderate and conciliatory.*

On the following day, the 28th of March, the

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* Ibid., No. 405, p. 271.

Secretary of State informed Count Schouvalow of the conclusion come to by her Majesty's Government on the proposals thus made to them. He said that, "on a full consideration of all the circumstances, and being unwilling to run the risk of unnecessary delay, her Majesty's Government had determined that the Protocol might be signed, supposing that an agreement upon all other points connected with it had been arrived at, without waiting for the conclusion of peace between Turkey and Montenegro. They could, however, only do so upon the condition that, inasmuch as it was solely in the interests of European peace that they had consented to sign any document such as that proposed, it must be understood that in the event of the object which we had in view—viz., disarmament or peace, not being obtained, the Protocol should be regarded as null and void."*

It will be seen from this narrative of the negotiations that the position of the Russian Government was perfectly clear and unambiguous. The demobilisation of the Russian Army would have amounted to a declaration that Russia had abandoned the intention of separate action. But the Emperor had declared publicly that he would and must have recourse to separate action unless common action on the part of all the Powers was to be maintained. Two things, therefore, were necessary to enable and to justify the

* Ibid., No. 409, p. 272.

Emperor in disarming. First, there must be some public record that the Powers continued to recognise a common duty in some combined action, however distant, and however long postponed, for the improvement of the subject populations of Turkey; and secondly, Turkey herself must give some evidence of the work of reform being seriously begun, and must ask Russia to consent to mutual and simultaneous disarmament. The first of these two demands of Russia was to be satisfied by the signature of the Protocol. The second of these demands could only be satisfied by the Turks themselves agreeing to accept the advice of the Powers as given in the Protocol, and by agreeing to send a special envoy to St. Petersburg to treat of disarmament. Russia distinctly declared and explained that she could not and would not disarm on the mere signature of the Protocol. Turkey was not to be any party to that signature, and therefore the execution of that instrument could afford no evidence of any acceptance of the transaction as a whole on the part of Turkey. That acceptance would be tested by a separate document —namely, the Russian Declaration. This Declaration, therefore, was submitted in its tenour to the English Government. It was specially required by that Government that this Declaration should be communicated to it, and that the English Cabinet should be at liberty to make public use of it in defence and explanation of its part in the negotiation.

Demobilisation on the part of Russia, and with demobilisation the only hope of peace, was to depend on the manner in which the Russian Declaration should be dealt with by the Porte. The British Government were thus parties to the Russian Declaration as one which was to be presented to the Porte, as much as they were parties to the Protocol itself. Both documents were parts of one transaction, in which, indeed, Russia and England took separate steps, but in which all the steps to be taken by each Power were agreed upon with the other.

Let us now look at the terms of these documents themselves :—

*Protocol.*

"The Powers who have undertaken in common the pacification of the East, and have with that view taken part in the Conference of Constantinople, recognise that the surest means of attaining the object, which they have proposed to themselves, is before all to maintain the agreement so happily established between them, and jointly to affirm afresh the common interest which they take in the improvement of the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey, and in the reforms to be introduced in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria, which the Porte has accepted on condition of itself carrying them into execution.

"They take cognisance of the conclusion of peace with Servia.

"As regards Montenegro, the Powers consider the rectification of the frontiers and the free navigation of the Boïana to be desirable in the interest of a solid and durable arrangement.

"The Powers consider the arrangements concluded, or to be concluded, between the Porte and the two Principalities, as a step accomplished towards the pacification which is the object of their common wishes.

"They invite the Porte to consolidate it by replacing its armies on a peace footing, excepting the number of troops indispensable for the maintenance of order, and by putting in hand with the least possible delay the reforms necessary for the tranquillity and well-being of the Provinces, the condition of which was discussed at the Conference. They recognise that the Porte has declared itself ready to realise an important portion of them.

"They take cognisance specially of the Circular of the Porte of the 13th of February, 1876, and of the declarations made by the Ottoman Government during the Conference and since, through its representatives.

"In view of these good intentions on the part of the Porte, and of its evident interest to carry them immediately into effect, the Powers believe that they have grounds for hoping that the Porte will profit by the present lull to apply energetically such measures as will cause that effective improvement in the condition of the Christian populations which is unanimously called for as indispensable to the tranquillity of Europe, and that having once entered on this path, it will understand that it concerns its honour as

well as its interests to persevere in it loyally and efficaciously.

"The Powers propose to watch carefully by means of their Representatives at Constantinople and their local Agents, the manner in which the promises of the Ottoman Government are carried into effect.

"If their hopes should once more be disappointed, and if the condition of the Christian subjects of the Sultan should not be improved in a manner to prevent the return of the complications which periodically disturb the peace of the East, they think it right to declare that such a state of affairs would be incompatible with their interests and those of Europe in general. In such case they reserve to themselves to consider in common as to the means which they may deem best fitted to secure the well-being of the Christian populations, and the interests of the general peace.

"Done at London, March 31, 1877.

(Signed) "MUNSTER.
"BEUST.
"L. D'HARCOURT.
"DERBY.
"L. F. MENABREA.
"SCHOUVALOFF."

It will be observed that the last clause of this Protocol does plainly involve a declaration that, in the event of Turkey failing in her promises of reform, the Powers would consider the state of things to be such

as to justify and necessitate farther interference. Thus, after the lapse of ten fateful months, during which events had been allowed to take their course in such a manner as to render useless any efforts which could now be made to influence the Turks, England found herself compelled to sign a Protocol involving those very threats, and those very acknowledgments of duty and obligations—on account of which, expressed much more gently, she had refused the Berlin Memorandum.

At the same time with the signature of the Protocol the Russian Ambassador handed in the Declaration which had previously been agreed upon with the Government of the Queen. It was as follows :—

"*Declaration made by the Ambassador of Russia before the signature of the Protocol.*

"If peace with Montenegro is concluded and the Porte accepts the advice of Eurpe, and shows itself ready to replace its forces on a peace footing, and seriously to undertake the reforms mentioned in the Protocol, let it send to St. Petersburg a Special Envoy to treat of disarmament, to which his Majesty the Emperor would also, on his part, consent.

"If massacres similar to those which have occurred in Bulgaria take place, this would necessarily put a stop to the measures of demobilisation."

In like manner the English Secretary of State handed in the separate Declaration of which notice had been given in the agreement with Russia. It was as follows:—

"The Undersigned, her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, makes the following declaration in regard to the Protocol signed this day by the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, and Russia:—

"Inasmuch as it is solely in the interests of European peace that her Britannic Majesty's Government have consented to sign the Protocol proposed by that of Russia, it is understood beforehand that, in the event of the object proposed not being attained —namely, reciprocal disarmament on the part of Russia and Turkey, and peace between them—the Protocol in question shall be regarded as null and void.

(Signed) "DERBY.

"London, March 31, 1877."

When we come to examine the applicability of this English Declaration to the Protocol, its very unusual character becomes painfully apparent. The Protocol consists mainly of an historical abstract of previous negotiations, and of a short statement of the motives which had actuated the Powers. This historical abstract was either correct or incorrect, and the explanation of motives was either true or untrue.

The English Cabinet had no right to sign the Protocol at all if in either of these matters it was open to any just objection. If, on the other hand, it was not in these matters open to objection, then it was nonsense to declare it to be "null and void" if the Turks did not choose to accept it. For example, the first paragraph affirmed that the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey was a matter of common interest to Europe. Did the English Cabinet mean that this affirmation was to be null and void if the Turks should deny it? So again, in another paragraph the Protocol called upon the Porte to put its hand to the promised reforms without delay. Was this call also to be null and void if the Turks refused to do so? Again, another paragraph recorded an agreement among the Powers to watch carefully by their representatives the manner in which the promises of the Ottoman Government should be carried into effect. Was this agreement, too, to be null and void if the Turks should please not to carry those promises into effect? Such statements and declarations as these ought not to have been made at all unless they were made sincerely, and as the record of obligations acknowledged in the face of the world. To make them for a temporary purpose, the attainment of which was dependent on the Turks, and to declare that they would be null and void if the Turks should reject the Protocol, was a proceeding which seems to

complete the unworthiness of our position. There was only one paragraph in the whole Protocol to which such a Declaration could apply without absolute disgrace, and that was the last, which pledges the Powers to farther deliberation with a view to action if the Turks persevered in their obstinacy. And as applicable to this paragraph the English Declaration amounted to an announcement that the Government of the Queen was determined to leave the Christian populations of Turkey to any fate that might befall them.

It will be observed that the result of this transaction, as a whole, was once more to put forward Russia as the only Power which made reforms in the interest of the Christian population of Turkey a *sine quâ non* of abstention from interference, and therefore a necessary condition of peace. England, on the other hand, was placed in the position, and by her separate Declaration ostentatiously claimed the position, of seeking peace without regard to any stipulation of this kind, and consequently without regard to the thrice-repeated confessions she had made, that the mere promises of Turkey were a "paper currency" which could no longer be accepted. Peace with honour was thus the demand of Russia. Peace at any price was the demand of the English Cabinet.

Two days after the signature of the Protocol the Foreign Secretary wrote to Mr. Jocelyn that he had

already communicated confidentially both the Protocol and the Declarations to the Turkish Ambassador, with a view to their being telegraphed to the Porte. Mr. Jocelyn was farther desired to point out to the Turkish Government "that the Protocol, as now signed, contained nothing to which the Porte could reasonably object."*

On the 4th of April, Count Schouvalow reported that the Porte was likely to protest against the Protocol, and hoped that her Majesty's Government would earnestly protest against so suicidal a step. To this Lord Derby replied that he had already done so, and had desired Mr. Jocelyn to say "that in the opinion of her Majesty's Government the Sultan would be very unwise if he would not endeavour to avail himself of the opportunity afforded him to arrange a mutual disarmament."† It will be observed that in this reply an opinion is expressed not only that the Porte should not protest against the Protocol, but that it should accept the Russian Declaration, for it was the Declaration and not the Protocol which gave room for the mutual disarmament.

This conclusion, which is matter of inference only from the despatch now quoted, is explicitly avowed in another despatch dated on the following day, the 5th of April. It will be seen that here the two documents, the Protocol and the Russian Declaration,

* Ibid., No. 436, p. 300. † Ibid., No. 458, p. 316.

are coupled together as constituting together the opportunity afforded to the Porte :—

*The Earl of Derby to Mr. Jocelyn.*

"Foreign Office, April 5, 1877.

"SIR,

"The Russian Ambassador has mentioned to me that some apprehension is felt at St. Petersburg that the Turkish Government intends to protest against the Protocol signed in London on the 31st ultimo.

"Such a proceeding on the part of the Porte would, in the opinion of her Majesty's Government, be most unwise ; and I have to instruct you to state to Safvet Pasha that her Majesty's Government were careful, before giving their assent to the Protocol, to obtain the omission or modification of those passages to which they thought that the Porte could with any reason object.

"Her Majesty's Government consider that the Protocol, taken in conjunction with the declaration made on behalf of Russia by Count Schouvaloff, gives an opportunity for the arrangement of a mutual disarmament by Russia and Turkey, of which the latter ought on every account to endeavour to avail herself.

"You will state that a contrary course of action will have the appearance of a reckless refusal by Turkey of the overtures made by Russia, and will have the effect of putting her in the wrong in the eyes of Europe.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."*

* Ibid., No. 468, p. 321.

It was at this moment when the interests of peace and the interests of millions of men were trembling in the balance, and when those interests were known to depend absolutely on the disposition of the Turkish Government, that the British Cabinet deemed it an opportune occasion not only to deprive the withdrawal of Sir Henry Elliot from Constantinople of the little significance which had been allowed to attach to it, but to contradict and reverse the only meaning which could attach to it, by appointing Mr. Layard to the vacant Embassy. No member of the Diplomatic body could have been selected with greater energy or ability, and certainly none who could so well represent that school of opinion which identifies the interests of England with the interests of the Porte. Accordingly the Turkish Government did not lose a moment in intimating its gratitude for this timely reinforcement of influence and authority. On the 3rd of April Safvet Pasha telegraphed as follows to the Turkish Ambassador in London :—

(*Translation.*)

"Telegraphic.] "Constantinople, April 3, 1877.

"Mr. Jocelyn has just announced to me by order of his Government the selection of Mr. Layard for the post of temporary Ambassador of her Britannic Majesty at Constantinople, and he expressed the hope that this choice would be agreeable to our august Master.

"His Imperial Majesty the Sultan is very sensible of this delicate mark of attention on the part of the English Government, and you are charged to inform Lord Derby that the choice of her Majesty the Queen cannot fail to be agreeable to our august Sovereign, the more so as his Imperial Majesty knew by reputation the eminent qualities of Mr. Layard, and his sentiments of friendship for our country."

It cannot be pretended that this step, taken at this moment, was one without a meaning which was special and intended. The German Government refused to follow the English example by reappointing an Ambassador at all. Lord Odo Russell was desired to communicate to the Foreign Minister at Berlin the appointment of Mr. Layard. But that Minister very properly replied that "the German Government had, for their part, determined to wait before sending the German Ambassador back to his post at Constantinople until the Porte had returned a favourable reply to the communication of the Protocol, and had sent a special envoy to St. Petersburg to settle the question of disarmament."*

On the 9th of April Count Schouvalow called at the Foreign Office to express his conviction that "if war was to be averted," the Turks must accept

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* Ibid., No. 499, p. 338.

the Russian Declaration by sending an Envoy to treat directly with the Russian Government at St. Petersburg. This language was in strict accordance with all that had gone before. But it was language which expressly gave to the Declaration the character of an ultimatum. Yet it was accepted by the English Foreign Secretary not only without remonstrance or objection, but with a promise to Count Schouvalow that the substance of it would be telegraphed to Mr. Jocelyn, with orders to make it known to the Porte.* Thus, again, the English Government was making use of the threats of Russia to obtain the assent of the Porte to the requirements of Europe.

On the 9th of April the Turkish Ambassador in London informed the English Foreign Secretary that the Porte considered the contents of the Protocol derogatory to its dignity and independence, and that rather than accede to its provisions it would be better for Turkey to face the alternative of war, even an unsuccessful war, resulting in the loss of one or two provinces. To this the English Minister replied in the usual tone,—not defending the Protocol on its merits, as representing what was true in fact and sound in principle, but on the contrary doing all he could to represent the Protocol as a document of small importance in itself,

* Ibid., No. 501, p. 339.

and as one to which the Turkish Government was not called upon to give "any formal and express consent." Tacit acquiescence was all that would be implied. It had been drawn up and signed without their being consulted. They were in no way responsible for it; and "after all, as he" (the English Minister) "understood its tenour, it called upon the Porte to do no more than it had either already expressed its willingness to do, or than it might be presumed to be willing to do, with a view to the well-being and security of Turkey."*

The Turks were not to be cajoled by arguments so manifestly evasive as these. They saw the real force of the Protocol to be that it sanctioned the principle, and affirmed the duty, of foreign interference. Accordingly Musurus Pasha replied that the Protocol was a virtual abrogation of the 9th Article of the Treaty of Paris, and that to allow it to pass in silence would, in the opinion of the Porte, be to surrender all that Turkey had fought for in regard to the Sultan's rights of freedom from foreign intervention, and that this was a humiliation to which his Government would not, at any risk, submit.

Here was an occasion, if any, for the English Foreign Secretary to defend the position of the Powers, and to reaffirm that statement of their rights.

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* Ibid., No. 503, p. 340

and duties to which he had set his hand. But no word of such defence was uttered—or if uttered, "something sealed the lips of that Evangelist." Turkey was again threatened, but threatened as before in name of Russia.

On the 6th of April Lord A. Loftus had an interview with Prince Gortchakow at St. Petersburg, and the Russian Minister then stated in an earnest and decided tone, that if the Porte should reply verbally, or in unsatisfactory or evasive language, the Imperial Government would consider the period of negotiations closed, and the time for military action had arrived. This intimation had in general terms been repeated over and over again, both by the Emperor and his Ministers, as the only alternative that remained to Russia in the event of the Porte continuing to resist the common advice of Europe. In general it had been received by British Ministers and Ambassadors without remonstrance. But on this occasion Lord A. Loftus thought that the last paragraph of the Protocol gave him some justification for deprecating the solitary action of Russia. That last paragraph did certainly contemplate united action, and united action only. The reminder of the British Ambassador produced a remarkable reply from the Russian Chancellor. He replied that the separate Declaration made by the English Cabinet rendered the Protocol null and void in the event of the object proposed not being attained—namely, reciprocal dis-

armament on the part of Russia and Turkey, and peace between them.*

There never has been a more remarkable case of an engineer "hoist with his own petard." The English Declaration was intended to relieve the Queen's Government from the alternative they had all along dreaded most—namely, that of having, under any possible circumstances, to join in coercing the Turks. But it was equally good for setting Russia free to exercise this coercion alone. Prince Gortchakow was not a diplomatist who was likely to fail in profiting by so obvious an advantage.

On the morning of the 10th of April Mr. Jocelyn had a remarkable conversation with the Grand Vizier, in which the result of the position yielded to Russia in the Protocol was very manifest. The Grand Vizier spoke of the Protocol as "a formal proposition to deliver up Turkey to be dealt with independently by Russia."† This was not literally true indeed of the Protocol; but it was substantially true of the Protocol when taken in conjunction with the Russian Declaration, and when taken in conjunction also with the avowal of the British Government that Russia was the moving agent in the whole transaction. No management could have been more ingenious or effectual for securing the

* Ibid., No. 518, p. 347.
† Turkey XXV., No. 26, p. 22–4

refusal of the Turks. Accordingly on the 12th of April the formal decision of the Porte was communicated to the English Government in a long telegraphic despatch from Safvet Pasha to the Turkish Ambassador in London. There was at least one merit in this reply. It was not ambiguous. It was as decisive in its renunciation of the Protocol which all the Powers had signed as of the Declaration which purported to emanate from Russia alone. The two documents were taken as the English Government had desired, "in conjunction." The one was interpreted by the other. The temper which was naturally aroused by the threats of Russia boiled over also against the more courteous exhortations of the other Powers. "Turkey," said this despatch, "as an independent State, cannot submit to be placed under any surveillance, whether collective or not." It was affirmed (falsely, as I have shown in a previous chapter) that the Treaty of Paris "explicitly declared the principle of non-intervention." "As for the clause which, in case of the non-execution of the promised reforms, would give to the Powers the right of concerting ulterior measures, the Imperial Government regards it in the light of a farther attack on its dignity and on its rights—a proceeding of intimidation calculated to deprive their action of all merit of spontaneity, and a source of grave complication for the present as well as for the future. No consideration can arrest the Imperial Government in their

determination to protest against the Protocol of the 31st March, and to consider it, as regards Turkey, as devoid of all equity, and consequently of all binding character."*

When this haughty and insolent despatch was read to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, he expressed his deep regret as to the view which the Porte had taken of a proceeding the principal object of which had been to extricate Turkey from a position of extreme embarrassment and danger. This was a repetition of the old language. It represented the one sole object of the British Government to be the extrication of Turkey—not the reform of Turkey, or the obtaining of some security for the subject populations—but simply the getting of the Turkish Government out of a great scrape. The Minister made indeed one other feeble suggestion. But it was crushed at once by the declaration of Musurus Pasha that "matters could not be settled in a satisfactory manner unless the Powers consented to annul the Protocol." To this there could be but one reply that "it did not appear what farther steps her Majesty's Government could take to avert a war which appeared to have become inevitable."†

On the 19th of April the Russian Government issued the following Circular to its Representatives in all the Capitals of Europe :—

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* Turkey, XV., No. 519, p. 354. † Ibid., No. 520, p. 355.

"St. Petersburg, April $\frac{7}{19}$, 1877.

"M. l'Ambassadeur,

"The Imperial Cabinet has exhausted, since the commencement of the Eastern crisis, all the means in its power to bring about, with the concurrence of the Great Powers of Europe, a lasting pacification of Turkey.

"All the propositions successively made to the Porte in consequence of the understanding established between the Cabinets have met with an invincible resistance on its part.

"The Protocol signed in London on the $\frac{19th}{31st}$ March of this year was the last expression of the collective will of Europe.

"The Imperial Cabinet had suggested it as a supreme effort of conciliation. It had made known, by the declaration bearing the same date and accompanying the Protocol, the conditions which, if loyally accepted and performed by the Ottoman Government, might bring about the re-establishment and consolidation of peace.

"The Porte has just answered by a fresh refusal.

"This eventuality had not been contemplated by the Protocol of London. While it formulated the views and decisions of Europe, that document had confined itself to stipulating that in case the Great Powers were deceived in their hope of seeing the Porte apply energetically the measures destined to afford to the condition of the Christian populations the improvement unanimously called for as indispensable to the tranquillity of Europe, they reserved to themselves to consider in common as to the means

which they might deem best fitted to secure the well-being of those populations and the interests of the general peace.

"Thus the Cabinets had foreseen the case of the Porte not fulfilling the promises it might have made, but not that of its rejecting the demands of Europe.

"At the same time the declaration made by Lord Derby at the time of signing the Protocol stated that as the Government of her Britannic Majesty had consented to the signature of that act only in view of the interests of the general peace, it was to be understood beforehand that, in the event of the proposed object not being attained, namely, reciprocal disarmament and peace between Russia and Turkey, the Protocol should be regarded as null and void.

"The refusal of the Porte and the reasons on which it is founded, leave no hope of deference on its part to the wishes and counsels of Europe, and no guarantee for the application of the reforms suggested for the improvement of the condition of the Christian populations. They render impossible peace with Montenegro, and the performance of the conditions which might bring about disarmament and pacification. In these circumstances, every chance is closed for efforts of conciliation. There remains no alternative but to allow the state of things to continue which the Powers have declared incompatible with their interests and those of Europe in general, or else to seek to obtain by coercion what the unanimous efforts of the Cabinets have not succeeded in obtaining from the Porte by persuasion.

Our august Master has resolved to undertake this work, which his Majesty had invited the Great Powers to pursue in common with him.

"He has given his armies the order to cross the frontiers of Turkey.

"You will make known this resolution to the Government to which you are accredited.

"In assuming this task, our august Master fulfils a duty imposed upon him by the interests of Russia, whose peaceful development is hindered by the permanent disturbances of the East. His Imperial Majesty has the conviction that he responds at the same time to the sentiments and interests of Europe.

"Accept, &c.

(Signed) "GORTCHAKOW."

The English Government having been, as we have seen, parties directly to the Protocol, and parties only a little less directly to the Russian Declaration, having, moreover, traded in all its communications with Turkey upon the fear of the consequences which would follow a refusal, now turned upon Russia and denounced her for acting on her Declaration, and treating it as an ultimatum. That this was known to be its character throughout the transaction which we have traced, is proved by the language of all who were concerned in it. That language implied that there was no alternative between disarmament and war. But disarmament was to depend on the acceptance by Turkey of the terms laid down in the Russian

Declaration, and on acquiescence, at least, in the terms of the Protocol which had been signed by all the other Powers. When both were absolutely repudiated, and repudiated too upon grounds which asserted an absolute independence on the part of Turkey of the Powers which had guaranteed her, there remained only two possible courses—one was acquiescence on the part of the Powers in this claim, with all that it involved: the other course was war. Russia had all along declared that she would not acquiesce in the abandonment of duties which all the Powers, and none more emphatically than England, had acknowledged to be obligatory upon them. If others chose to submit to such ignominy, she would not. Such had been her language throughout, and it was with the full knowledge of this determination of the Russian Government that the English Cabinet had joined in the Protocol, and had come to an agreement with Russia as to the terms of her Declaration..

Under these circumstances it becomes a matter of curious interest to examine the reply of the Queen's Government to the Circular in which Russia stated and defended her determination to accept the alternative which was left to her by the hopeless obstinacy of the Porte.

The reply of the Queen's Government to the Russian Circular was in the form of a despatch to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and was dated the 1st of May. It ran as follows:—

"Foreign Office, May 1, 1877.

"MY LORD,

"I forwarded to your Excellency, in my despatch of the 24th ultimo, a copy of Prince Gortchakow's circular despatch of the $\frac{7}{19}$th ultimo, announcing that the Emperor of Russia had given orders to his armies to cross the frontiers of Turkey.

"Her Majesty's Government have received this communication with deep regret. They cannot accept the statements and conclusions with which Prince Gortchakow has accompanied it, as justifying the resolution thus taken.

"The Protocol to which Her Majesty's Government, at the instance of that of Russia, recently became parties required from the Sultan no fresh guarantees for the reform of his administration."

Let us stop here to examine the truth of this first assertion. It is ingeniously worded, so as to be true in the letter, whilst it is wholly untrue in substance and in effect. It is true that the Protocol did not require "from the Sultan" any fresh guarantees, for the very sufficient reason that it did not require from the Sultan anything at all. The Sultan was no party to the Protocol, inasmuch as it had been a distinct part of the agreement between England and Russia that the Sultan should not be asked to sign it. But although it is true that the Protocol required from the Sultan no fresh guarantees for Turkish reform, it is not true that the Protocol gave no fresh guarantees on this subject to Russia and to the other Powers which

signed it. On the contrary, it was Russia's declared purpose in proposing the Protocol—a purpose to which England assented when she agreed to sign that Paper, that the Protocol should afford the best of all guarantees for Turkish reforms, namely, a renewed agreement among the Powers of Europe that they would demand these reforms, and, in some way or other, would ultimately insist upon them. It afforded in short the prospect of joint action instead of individual action, as the method of guarantee and as the means of enforcing it. But as the untrustworthiness of all Turkish promises, taken by themselves, had been universally proclaimed and confessed, this was the special feature of the Protocol to which Russia had all along attached value. To deny, therefore, that the Protocol afforded any fresh guarantees for Turkish reform, because it did not seek for these guarantees "from the Sultan," was either a mere verbal quibble, or else it was a confession, on the part of the English Cabinet, that in signing that document it had no serious intention of acting on the principles it embodied, but had signed it merely for the purpose of postponing action, and thus escaping for the moment from a dangerous position.

Accordingly, the next paragraph proceeds in a strain which amounts very nearly to an avowal of this motive, and of this course of action:—

"With a view of enabling Russia the better to

abstain from isolated action, it affirmed the interest taken in common by the Powers in the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey. It went on to declare that the Powers would watch carefully the manner in which the promises of the Ottoman Government were carried into effect; and that should their hopes once more be disappointed, they reserved to themselves the right to consider in common the means which they might deem best fitted to secure the well-being of the Christian populations and the interests of the general peace.

"To these declarations of the intentions of the Powers the consent of the Porte was not asked or required. 'The Porte no doubt has thought fit—unfortunately, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government—to protest against the expressions in question as implying an encroachment on the Sultan's sovereignty and independence. But while so doing, and while declaring that they cannot consider the Protocol as having any binding character on Turkey, the Turkish Government have again affirmed their intention of carrying into execution the reforms already promised."

Here, again, we have the English Cabinet representing itself as doing everything it had done, and saying everything it had said, at the instance of Russia: and here, again, we have it contradicting its own repeated declarations that Turkish promises were not to be accepted. We have already seen that every step it had previously taken in the direction of concert with the other Powers, or with

any one of them, had been always carefully explained to Turkey as a step which they had been compelled to take, not as a right one in itself, but as one rendered necessary by the fear of Russian action. In this last Protocol England had reaffirmed the interest taken by the Powers in the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey; but here we have it avowed that she had done so only "with a view of enabling Russia better to abstain from isolated action." The whole instrument is treated as one of no importance or value on account of any one of the declarations it involves, but only as an instrument in which England had acquiesced in order to keep back the only Power which seemed to be earnest in the matter. And this language as to the past is again followed by the usual conclusion as to the future. Europe was to trust to Turkish promises again—promises which the Queen's Government, both as a body and in the persons of its leading members, had over and over again denounced as illusory.

But the despatch proceeds:—

"Her Majesty's Government cannot therefore admit, as is contended by Prince Gortchakow, that the answer of the Porte removed all hope of deference on its part to the wishes and advice of Europe, and all security for the application of the suggested reforms. Nor are they of opinion that the terms of the note necessarily precluded the possibility of the

conclusion of peace with Montenegro, or of the arrangement of mutual disarmament. Her Majesty's Government still believe that, with patience and moderation on both sides, these objects might not improbably have been attained.

"Prince Gortchakow, however, asserts that all opening is now closed for attempts at conciliation; that the Emperor has resolved to undertake the task of obtaining by coercion that which the unanimous efforts of all the Powers have failed to obtain from the Porte by persuasion; and he expresses His Imperial Majesty's conviction that this step is in accordance with the sentiments and the interests of Europe.

"It cannot be expected that Her Majesty's Government should agree in this view. They have not concealed their feeling that the presence of large Russian forces on the frontiers of Turkey, menacing its safety, rendering disarmament impossible, and exciting a feeling of apprehension and fanaticism among the Mussulman population, constituted a material obstacle to internal pacification and reform. They cannot believe that the entrance of those armies on Turkish soil will alleviate the difficulty or improve the condition of the Christian population throughout the Sultan's dominions."

Two arguments seem to be relied on here. One is, that the fear of a war with Russia had impeded or prevented the work of reform in Turkey; the second is, that actual war would aggravate the sufferings of the subject-populations.

As regards the first of these arguments, it did not come well from those who for many months past had used no other plea with Turkey, and seemed to place no hope whatever in any other, than the plea that if reforms were not effected Turkey would be invaded by Russia, and that not one of the Powers would be disposed to help her. As regards the second argument —that war would not improve the condition of the Christian populations—it is of course true if it refers to the immediate effects of war conducted in any country and for any purpose. Much physical suffering arose out of the civil wars which established the liberties of England. But it is not generally held that on this account it would have been much better to endure the exaction of a little ship-money, or the occasional oppressions of the Star Chamber. It was true, no doubt, that the miseries likely to be inflicted on the people by war in Turkey were exceptionally great, because it was a war which English policy had deliberately thrown into the hands of a single Power, and had thus contributed to render it much more arduous and consequently much more bloody. But it is not true that the ultimate results of war are worse than the continued endurance of such governments as that of Turkey. It may be a melancholy fact, but it is a fact, that in the history of the world such evils as those under which the populations of Turkey have been suffering for many centuries have never been finally remedied except by

war. This paragraph, therefore, of the despatch is either a mere truism or else it is an assertion in the teeth of all the experience of mankind.

We now come, however, to a passage of a very different kind, and one which requires careful attention:—

"But the course on which the Russian Government has entered involves graver and more serious considerations. It is in contravention of the stipulation of the Treaty of Paris of March 30, 1856, by which Russia and the other signatory Powers engaged, each on its own part, to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. In the Conferences of London of 1871, at the close of which the above stipulation with others was again confirmed, the Russian Plenipotentiary, in common with those of the other Powers, signed a Declaration affirming it to be 'an essential principle of the law of nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a Treaty, nor modify the stipulations thereof, unless with the consent of the Contracting Parties by means of an amicable arrangement.'"

It will be seen that this paragraph involves that interpretation of the Treaty of Paris and of the Declaration of 1871 which has been dealt with in the first chapter of this work, and has been shown to be erroneous. It affirms that the Powers in promising to respect the independence and integrity of the Turkish Empire bound themselves not to go to war with the Sultan, however grossly

he might violate the promises to Europe recorded in the same Treaty. There is no shadow of a foundation for this argument. If it had been true, the English Government had itself repeatedly violated the Treaty in the language it held towards Turkey and in the demands it had made upon the Sultan. England, in concert with the other Powers, had enforced similar demands upon the Porte in the case of Syria, and in this very Protocol had intimated that at some time or other, however late, she would be prepared to consider how they might be enforced in the case of the European Provinces of Turkey.

The second argument in this paragraph—namely, the argument founded on the Declaration made by the Powers of Europe in 1871—is, if possible, still more incapable of defence. That Declaration referred to the case of the Russian denunciation of the Articles in the Treaty of Paris commonly called "the Black Sea Articles." I have dealt with the case in the chapter of this work which sets forth the terms and meaning of the Treaties of 1856 and 1871. Suffice it to repeat here that the Treaty of Paris distinctly contemplates the case of separate and individual wars between Turkey and one or other of the guaranteeing Powers. It deals with that case by providing that every Power before proceeding to hostilities should have recourse to mediation. In this case every resource of me[illegible]-

tion had been exhausted. Turkey had haughtily refused the advice, remonstrances, and exhortations of all Europe combined. It was not until this refusal had been given that Russia felt herself compelled to act. The Declaration in the Treaty of 1871 has no reference whatever to a case of this kind.

The remaining paragraph of the English Despatch depends on those which have been now examined:—

"In taking action against Turkey on his own part, and having recourse to arms without further consultation with his allies, the Emperor of Russia has separated himself from the European concert hitherto maintained, and has at the same time departed from the rule to which he himself had solemnly recorded his consent.

"It is impossible to foresee the consequences of such an act. Her Majesty's Government would willingly have refrained from making any observations in regard to it; but, as Prince Gortchakow seems to assume, in a Declaration addressed to all the Governments of Europe, that Russia is acting in the interest of Great Britain and that of the other Powers, they feel bound to state, in a manner equally formal and public, that the decision of the Russian Government is not one which can have their concurrence or approval.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."

When this reply of the English Government was read to Prince Gortchakow on the 6th of May, by

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our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, he made no other reply than to correct a misquotation which it involved of the Russian Circular. That Paper is referred to in the English reply as assuming that in going to war with Turkey, Russia was taking a "step" in accordance with the wishes of Europe. The Russian Circular made no such assumption. Not the "step" of going to war, but the "objects" for which the war was undertaken, was set forth in that Circular as objects in which Russia claimed the sympathies of Europe. Beyond this correction the Russian Minister declared his intention of making no reply, unless the Emperor should order otherwise.*

On the 24th of April, the Russian Emperor declared war, and on the same day his armies crossed the Pruth.†

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Turkey, XXV., 1877, No. 277, p. 214.
† Ibid., Nos. 94, 95, p. 60.

END OF VOL. I.

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